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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Initial report of States parties

Lebanon*

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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Part I
Country and population

Lebanon is a parliamentary democratic republic.

Political System : Republic

Independence Date : November 22, 1943

Area : 10,452 square kilometers, to be increased by the process currently under way of filling in a portion of the sea with earth

Population : Approximately 3,111,828 inhabitants

Official Language : Arabic

Capital : Beirut

National Currency : Lebanese Pound

Economic System : Free enterprise

I. Territory

Lebanon is situated on the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It is bordered on the north and east by the Syrian Arab Republic; on the west by the Mediterranean sea; on the south by occupied Palestine.

Between 1975 and 1990, Lebanon was the scene of painful and bloody incidents, including two Israeli invasions. The first invasion occurred in 1978 when Israel occupied a large area of southern Lebanon, known since as the "Occupied Border Strip," and the second in 1982 when the Israelis reached the capital. Despite United Nations' resolutions, particularly Resolution 425, which was issued by the UN Security Council on March 14, 1978, and calls for Israel to withdraw from Lebanon unconditionally, Israel still occupies a considerable area of southern Lebanon and of the western Bekaa, representing approximately 850 square kilometers. Consequently, this occupied area of Lebanon is exposed to all sorts of daily assaults, and life there has become extremely difficult. These assaults have caused the Lebanese to abandon their lands ; many have been incarcerated in Israeli detention camps, including a significant number of women who are still imprisoned in the al-Khyiam detention camp, and are subjected to various kinds of torture, or have been forced away from their families.

The painful incidents that took place in Lebanon ended in 1990, after which the Lebanese adopted a new charter, known as the National Accord Pact, and began reconstruction.

The results of these incidents were a death toll of more than one hundred thousand Lebanese, the collapse of hundreds of buildings, and the destruction of the infrastructure due to the violent shelling. Add to that the Lebanese emigration of approximately 875,000 persons between 1975 and 1990, and subsequently the Lebanese brain drain, not to mention the forced displacement of a large number of Lebanese from their villages and regions as a result of sectarian classification, and finally the suffering of 30% of the Lebanese population from total or partial physical handicaps.

These incidents affected Lebanese women just as well : their proportion to men increased as many lost their husbands and were forced to carry the burden of the family on their own.

II. Population

The last census in Lebanon was taken in 1932 ; therefore, the present available sources differ on estimated population figures. On the one hand, the survey of statistical demographic and housing data (1996) estimates the Lebanese population at three million one hundred eleven thousand eight hundred twenty eight (3,111,828) persons, distributed among the governorates as follows : 13.1% in Beirut, 36.08% in Mount Lebanon, 12.9% in the Bekaa, 21.6% in the North, 9.1% in the South and 6.6% in Nabatiyeh.

On the other hand, the study of the living conditions of Lebanese families estimates the resident population at four million five hundred thousand twenty five (4,500,025) persons, distributed among the governorates as follows : 10% in Beirut, 37.6% in Mount Lebanon, 13.5% in the Bekaa, 20.2% in the North, 11.8% in the South, and 6.9% in Nabatiyeh.

As for the ratio of men to women, there are 100.9 men to every 100 women. This gap varies according to the governorates : it decreases to 95.2 men to every 100 women in Beirut while it increases to 105.7 men to every 100 women in the Bekaa.

A. Life expectancy at birth

Lebanon has a high percentage of youth considering that the percentage of children under fifteen is about 28.19% for girls and 30.49% for boys, the highest percentage for girls being in the age range 10-14 at 10.19%. These percentages differ among rural and urban areas, the female percentage being higher in the latter (percentage of girls under fourteen 26.85% in urban areas and 33.82% in rural areas).

Furthermore, the averages for the elderly are increasing ; the percentage of women over 65 has reached 7% and the percentage of women in the age range 45-64 has risen to 15.7%. Life expectancy at birth is 72 years for women and 69 years for men.

B. Infant mortality rate

The average rate of mortality for infants under age one year is 27 per thousand (27.6 per thousand for girls and 28.2 per thousand for boys) and the total average rate of mortality for infants under age five

is 32 per thousand (33 per thousand for boys and 32 per thousand for girls). The difference in the death rate between males and females results from factors related to the physical nature of girls and boys in general. Statistics show that stillbirths are often caused by diseases resulting from pregnancy, childbirth and blood diseases.

C. Mothers' mortality rate

The mothers' mortality rate in Lebanon is estimated at 104 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to the national survey of mother and child health. However, this estimate is high and states the reality indirectly for a previous period approximately 12 years prior to the date of the survey.

D. Fertility rate

The total fertility rate in Lebanon has reached 2.2. Women who have given birth to 3 or 4 children constitute the majority, while 7% didn't bear children and 4% gave birth to 9 children or more.

Fertility rates differ between urban and rural areas. They are decreasing in the cities (2) in comparison with the rural areas (2.8).

Fertility rates also differ according to age groups : 127.5 for every 100 women in the age range 25-29, and 113.1 for every 100 women in the age range 30-40.

E. Families headed by women

Families headed by women constitute 12.5% of the total number of families resident in Lebanon, against 87.5% of families headed by men. This percentage is higher in the cities (about 20%) than in rural areas (11%).

The majority of these families are small (29.06% one-member families). They are relatively smaller than the average family size of 4.8 members.

Information shows that families headed by women have a low income. For example, families whose monthly income is less than 800,000 Lebanese pounds constitute 40% of the total families at the national level, while this percentage rises to 59% for families headed by women.

F. Geographical distribution and population growth

Population growth in Lebanon has decreased to about 1.4% during the last ten years. Among the factors that have led to this number are the Lebanese civil war, immigration, economic factors and an increase in the population's educational level and awareness. Furthermore, the average rate of the female population growth has decreased from 2.4% (1970 - 1986) to 0.6% since 1987.

Urban population constitutes 80% of the total Lebanese population. Population density is estimated at over 300 persons per square kilometer.

Women constitute about half of the Lebanese population (49.8%), and the percentage of women who have not changed their housing since birth is 64.8% against 71.2% for men.

The general average of emigration from Lebanon is 0.79%. Female emigration reaches 0.24% against 1.34% for men (of the total population). The highest percentage of female emigrants belongs to the age range 15-24 (0.43%) and amounts to 15.3% of the total emigrants against 84.6% for men.

G. Social, economic and cultural indicators

Lebanon is a parliamentary democratic republic. Its population participates actively in political life and enjoys full freedom at the intellectual, social, political, cultural, economic and informational levels.

Eighteen confessional groups and sects coexist in Lebanon and constitute the main authority for the majority of the Lebanese population regarding personal status issues. Confessionalism affects the political, social, and cultural orientations of its followers. This played a leading role in fuelling fanaticism among the Lebanese. It also generated frequent internal and bloody quarrels, the latest being the Lebanese civil war that lasted fifteen years (1975-1990).

The Lebanese express their ideas and opinions freely through the mass media, and daily, weekly and monthly newspapers.

The economy is free and based on agriculture, light industries, imports, exports, tourism and banking. Unfortunately, it has come up against difficulties because of the painful incidents that raged throughout Lebanon. The government, in collaboration with the private sector, has exerted a huge effort to promote the economy and to put it back on track, particularly at the level of boosting the Lebanese currency value. The results were positive, but the private sector faced difficulties in pushing the economy forward, especially in the productive industries, which have not gotten any attention from the government.

The number of economically active people is estimated at 1,362,231 from among the total residents in Lebanon (1997). The percentage of workers is estimated at about 89% (1997) of that total number. As to the average of the female economic participation, it is evaluated at about 14.7% against 53.1% for men.

The percentage of salaried women reaches 86% against 61% for men, and a percentage of 11% of women are self-employed against 31% of men.

The unemployment rate is 8.5% (1997), and it continually rises as a result of the deteriorating economic situation. The percentage of families living under the poverty line in Lebanon is estimated at about 28% of the total number of families, among which about 7.5% live in destitution ; in other words their revenue is below the poverty line.

The spread of poverty among regions and sectors differs : 75% of families working in the agricultural sector are poor, in comparison with 31% of families whose sole supporter works in public administration, 26% in industry, 16% in services and 13% in commerce. The majority of these poor people live in slums around the capital and other cities ; and most of the titutes live in rural areas and represent a quarter of the population of these areas.

The monthly average income per family in Lebanon is 1,540,000 Lebanese pounds (family average size 4.8 members) and it differs among the governorates.

According to the Bank of Lebanon, the foreign debt was 6,300 billion Lebanese pounds at the end of 1998, and the national debt is 21,685 billion Lebanese pounds.

As far as education is concerned, Lebanon has witnessed noticeable improvement during the past years in the percentage of schooling and literacy for men and women alike. The average illiteracy rate at the national level is 11.6%, and yet the female illiteracy rates exceed those of men in general, at 16% for women over the age of ten against 7.2% for men. Lebanon has established compulsory basic education through the age of 12 but has not been able to implement it until now.

III. General political structure

A. Political system

Lebanon is an independent State, completely sovereign and indivisible within frontiers stipulated in the Constitution and internationally recognized.

Lebanon is a democratic State. People are the source of governmental powers. They participate in the government through the representatives they elect.

Each citizen who reaches legal age (21 years) has the right to vote for representatives. He/she is the source of governmental powers which he/she exercises through constitutional institutions.

The system is parliamentary, based on the principle of separation, balance and collaboration among the three powers.

The system is liberal, based on respect of freedoms, including freedom to form political parties, freedom of speech, and freedom of belief. The election system in Lebanon does not adopt proportional representation ; it is a denominational system which distributes representation among the denominations and sects in the various regions.

The economic system is free and guarantees individual initiative and the right to private property.

B. Constitution

The Constitution is the principal document that determines the form of government. The Lebanese Constitution was ratified on May 23, 1926 and was amended several times since October 17, 1927, starting with the important amendment that took place on 11/9/1943, following the independence of Lebanon and the end of the French mandate, to the amendment dated September 21, 1990, known as the Taef Accord, which put an end to the Lebanese war.

The Constitution comprises fundamental provisions which include the Preamble, and provisions related to the State, its territory and the rights and obligations of the Lebanese.

The Constitution also stipulates the fundamental rules of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government.

The Constitution establishes the Supreme Council for the impeachment of presidents and ministers and lays down the guidelines for the national budget.

The Constitution also stipulates abolishing political confessionalism in stages.

C. Branches of government

The legislative branch is represented by the Parliament, which is elected by the people (128 deputies).

The executive branch is represented by the President of the Republic and the Council of Ministers.

The judicial branch is represented by the judges who render judgments in the name of the people according to the laws emanating from Parliament.

1. Legislative branch

The legislative branch is entrusted to the Parliament, which is composed of deputies elected by the people. Each deputy is elected by direct secret ballot for a term of four years. Parliamentary seats are equally distributed between Christians and Moslems and proportionally among their denominations and regions. The number of deputies is currently 128, among which three are women.

Although Lebanon granted political rights to women in 1953, these rights have not been effectively put into practice. The access of the three women to the Parliament was dependent on men.

The first woman entered the Parliament in 1963 continuing the office of her father directly following his death. In 1991, the wife of a deceased deputy entered the Parliament by means of appointment.

During the parliamentary elections of 1992 and 1996, three women succeeded in obtaining a large number of votes, establishing their presence in parliamentary life and confirming women's competence in the decision-making process.

2. Executive branch

The executive branch plans and enforces the State's policy and is entrusted to the President of the Republic with the assistance of the Ministers. Pursuant to the national charter known as the Taef Accord, on the basis of which the Constitution was amended, the executive branch was transferred from the presidency to the Council of Ministers.

The Constitution defines the essential nature of the functions, prerogatives, and responsibilities of the President, the Prime Minister, and the Ministers.

To date no Lebanese women have succeeded in becoming ministers, despite their struggle in this domain and despite the availability of women with superior qualifications that would enable them to hold this office.

3. Judicial branch

The judicial branch is in charge of all courts, at all levels and specializations. The judicial branch is independent of the other branches in the examination of cases and in the rendering of judgements therein. No restrictions limit the independence of the judicial branch, unless provided for in the Constitution. Judges fulfill their responsibilities independently and may only be transferred or dismissed from the judicial body in accordance with the provisions of the law. The judicial branch returns verdicts and passes sentences in the name of the Lebanese people.

The organization of the judicial branch in Lebanon is based on the juridical judiciary and on the administrative judiciary.

The juridical judiciary is the body of judges who are members of the juridical judiciary and who preside over the Courts of arbitration.

The administrative judiciary is the State Council. It is a Supreme Court handling the administrative judiciary, in other words the supervision of the drafting of the legislative and regulatory provisions in accordance with the law.

The judges of the State Council are administrative judges fulfilling their responsibilities independently.

The financial judiciary is managed by the Accounting Department. Its mission consists in guarding the public funds and the funds deposited in the Treasury and in controlling their use.

It is administratively linked to the Prime Minister.

The military judiciary consists of a military court of cassation, a permanent military court, military justices of the peace, a commissioner with assistants and investigating magistrates.

The law determines accountability regarding crimes and persons appearing before a military court.

The Constitutional Council controls the constitutionality of laws and sees to it that they do not contradict the provisions of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court judges the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Ministers for their actions during their term of office.

The Economic and Social Council aims at improving dialogue, collaboration and coordination among the sectors and at ensuring their participation in the formulation of the State's socio-economic policy. The Council has an advisory capacity. It finally came into being on December 9, 1999, after the Council of Ministers appointed its 71 members. This step was taken after a long history that dates back to the fifties when voices rose demanding its creation. Even though the Taef Accord stipulated that it be created, the law ordering its formation was not approved until January 1995, after having been passed around among the committees and the Cabinets of Ministers.

According to Article 22 of the law, the Council should have been set up within a period of five months following its publication date in the official gazette (January 19, 1995). But that did not take place, and the decree of the most representative bodies was not issued until August 19, 1999. The decree gave the aforementioned bodies a one-month time limit to present a list of the names of their candidates including at least three times the number of positions allotted to each. The government appointed then the members on the basis of this list. The next step was to convene its general meeting, within 15 days following the publication date of the decree for the nomination or appointment of the Council members, as provided for in Article 10 of the law.

It is worth noting that the Council comprises a considerable number of presidents of syndicates, councils, and unions, and eminent economic and social personalities.

The religious courts : there are eighteen legally recognized denominations in Lebanon pursuant to resolution n°60 issued in 1936 which recognized seventeen denominations, to which the eighteenth was recently added.

The Lebanese State entrusted each denomination with the competence to look into whatever concerns the personal status of its followers. Therefore, each denomination has its own courts, laws, and code of procedure and is completely independent of the judiciary.

The law issued on April 2, 1951 established the jurisdiction of the religious authorities of the Christian denominations.

The law issued on July 6, 1962 defined the judicial organization of the Islamic denominations.

Women in the judiciary

The Lebanese woman has fought her way into the judiciary past the obstacles that blocked her progress. Until the mid-eighties, her presence was uncommon and discretionary. However, since the late eighties and the beginning of the nineties, the Lebanese woman has entered the judiciary at the top, presiding over sessions and ruling in the name of the Lebanese people.

The number of female judges is 68 out of 364 in the juridical judiciary, 6 out of 34 in the administrative judiciary and one female judge in the State Council, recently appointed president of the consultation office at the Ministry of Justice (by proxy).

So far, no female judge has acceded to the Constitutional Council, to the Judicial Council nor to the Religious Courts (there is one female member in the Evangelical denomination), even though these courts handle everything directly related to women regarding personal status.

The Lebanese Constitution establishes equality for all Lebanese to enjoy full civil and political rights, to undertake obligations, and to get public jobs, without explicitly providing for equality between men and women in all rights.

The judicial branch, which protects and guarantees each citizen's rights, did not fail to apply international agreements, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, even when a contradiction arose, pursuant to the civil procedure code, Article 2.

IV. General legal framework for the protection of human rights

In Lebanon, women's rights are human rights ; thus, they are not open to interpretation or division. Accordingly, women's rights should be viewed in accordance with the laws, conventions, and constitutions related to human rights.

Incorporating women in Lebanese legislation is one of their human rights. This legislation must eliminate sexual discrimination and the injustice visited upon women in order to equally safeguard women's rights as well as human rights.

A. Constitutional provisions

In its Preamble, the Lebanese constitution provides that Lebanon is a "founder member of the United Nations Organization, bound by its charters and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that the State embodies these principles in all rights and fields without exception."

It also provides that the Lebanese shall be equal before the law, equally enjoy civil and political rights and discharge public duties and obligations without discrimination (Article 7) and that each Lebanese shall have the right to join the civil service. No one shall have an advantage over others except on the basis of merit and aptitude according to the conditions stipulated by the law (Article 12).

Moreover, the Lebanese Constitution does not explicitly proclaim equality between men and women as do most other Constitutions and as the Convention stipulates. However, it does recognize the absolute equality of all citizens before the law.

The Constitution recognizes political equality. Every citizen who has reached the age of 21 has the right to vote (Article 21). Women, as well as men, have the right to run for parliamentary, municipal, and optional elections. The Constitution guarantees public and personal liberties, freedom of belief, education and speech (Articles 2, 9, 10, 12).

Lebanon is known to have ratified many conventions directly related to women issued by the United Nations and by the International Labor Organization.

B. International conventions ratified by Lebanon

Conventions related to women issued by the United Nations:

- The convention on the political rights of women in 1953, ratified by Lebanon in 1955
- The convention issued by UNESCO related to nondiscrimination in education, in 1960, ratified by Lebanon in 1964
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979, ratified by Lebanon in 1996

Conventions directly related to women issued by the International Labour Organization:

- The convention on women workers in night shifts in 1948, which was amended by convention number 171 in 1990, ratified by Lebanon in 1962
- The convention on salary equity in 1951, ratified by Lebanon in 1977
- The convention on the employment of women in underground work in 1937, ratified by Lebanon in 1946
- The convention on nondiscrimination in employment and professions in 1958 ratified by Lebanon in 1977
- The convention on employment policy in 1964, ratified by Lebanon in 1977

C. International conventions not ratified by Lebanon

Conventions directly related to women issued by the United Nations:

- The convention against white slave trafficking and on the exploitation of others through prostitution (1949)

- The complementary convention of 1956
- The convention on the citizenship of married women (1957)
- The convention on consent to marriage, minimum age, and registration of marriage (1962)

Conventions directly related to women issued by the International Labour Organization:

- The convention on a paid teaching license (1973)
- The convention issued by the International Labour Organization for farmers (1975)
- The convention on the development of human resources (1975)
- The convention on workers and family providers (1981)
- The convention number 103 on maternity leave

It should be pointed out that the conventions Lebanon did not ratify pertain, on the one hand, to personal status and citizenship, about which Lebanon made reservations in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. On the other hand, they reveal the injustice women suffer from in labor laws, in social security, and in penal codes, as well as the acts of violence committed against them. Despite remarkable improvement during the last years in the achievements aiming at making the Lebanese legislation faultless and free of any text unjust towards women, and for which female pioneers in the fields of labor and nongovernmental activity have fought, women have managed to achieve the following :

• Political rights	1953
• Equality in inheritance for non-Muslim denominations	1959
• The right of women to choose their citizenship	1965
• Freedom of movement	1974
• Elimination of the provisions punishing contraception	1983
• Unification of the retirement age for men and women under the social security law	1987

• Recognition of the qualification of women to testify in the Land Register	1993
• Recognition of the qualification of married women to be involved in business without their husband's permission	1994
• The right of the female employee in the diplomatic service who marries a foreigner to pursue her duties	1994
• The qualification of married women regarding insurance contracts	1995
• Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	1996

However, these amendments must also be introduced into the main laws, personal status laws, and the woman's right to grant citizenship to her children.

D. Reservations about the Convention

Lebanon expressed reservations concerning Article 9, Section 2 and about Articles 16 and 29 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

1. Personal status

Lebanon expressed reservation concerning Article 16 of the convention on marriage and family, equal rights and responsibilities in marriage, rights and responsibilities of the mother in all matters related to her children, including guardianship, custody, trusteeship, adoption, and the right to choose the family name.

This reservation originates from the fact that the Lebanese do not comply with one law with respect to their personal status, but each Lebanese abides by the laws and courts of his or her denomination.

Not only do these laws discriminate between men and women, they also discriminate between citizens themselves. Moreover, they are inconsistent with the principle of equality before the law as stated in the Lebanese Constitution and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Lebanon ratified without any reservation.

Personal status is determined by kinship, name, place of residence, family status and physical and mental fitness, as well as by financial matters, i.e. will and inheritance.

There are legal provisions that apply to all Lebanese, provisions that apply to Muslims, others that apply to non-Muslims and still others that apply to foreigners.

Lebanese Law recognizes civil marriage concluded abroad and registered in the personal status department. The marriage is considered to be valid and subject to the law of the country in which it was concluded.

In case a dispute concerning this marriage arises, the Lebanese courts examine it and apply the law of the country in which it was concluded.

In order to eliminate the discrimination against women that characterizes the personal status laws, in which women are considered subordinate to men, are expected to be obedient to them, and are subject to their will, while being deprived of all authority both in the home and over the children, their rights being oppressed and subject to the religious courts, many attempts were made to adopt an optional civil law of personal status. It was submitted to the Parliamentary Council, but the Parliamentary Administration and Justice Committee did not look into it.

In 1998, President Elias Hraoui submitted the civil marriage draft to the Council of Ministers, and it was approved. However, it was not sent to Parliament. In view of this explicit violation of legal and constitutional procedures, human rights movements, secular parties and nongovernmental associations called upon each other and signed a petition reclaiming an optional civil law of personal status. They are still struggling via various democratic means in the aim of getting it approved.

2. Citizenship and naturalization

Lebanon expressed reservation concerning the citizenship clause stated in Article 9, Paragraph 2 of the Convention.

Resolution n°15 dated January 19, 1925 and the law issued on November 1, 1960 governing citizenship and naturalization provisions.

In Article 1 of this resolution, each person born of a Lebanese father regardless of his place of birth shall be considered Lebanese.

Therefore, citizenship is transmitted by paternity, not by maternity except in two cases. In all cases, Lebanese women can not grant their children their citizenship. The law gives the Lebanese husband the right to pass his citizenship to his foreign wife, which is a right forbiden to the Lebanese woman.

The citizenship and naturalization laws give the foreign woman, who has acquired Lebanese citizenship, the right to grant her minor children this citizenship after the death of her Lebanese husband. Thereby, the law favors the foreign woman over the Lebanese, and the minors born of a foreign mother who has acquired Lebanese citizenship a privilege over the minors born of a Lebanese mother.

The amendment of the citizenship and naturalization law requires the establishment of equality between the father and the mother regarding the citizenship of the children and the withdrawal of the reservations Lebanon had concerning Article 9, Paragraph 2 of the Convention.

3. Arbitration

Lebanon also expressed reservations concerning Article 29, which states that any dispute between two or more States Parties shall be settled by negotiation, shall not be submitted to arbitration nor referred to the International Court of Justice. Each State Party may express a reservation about the aforementioned procedures or withdraw this reservation.

It is concluded, therefore, that many attempts have been made to introduce certain texts of the human rights conventions and charters into the national legal system of the country.

Since 1934, many prompt attempts have been made at the legal level in order to make Lebanese legislation faultless and devoid of any discrimination against women. Female pioneers and militants, as well as feminist and nongovernmental associations, acted as a catalyst in this endeavor and were successful in some regards.

After Lebanon signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1996, only a minor amendment was made to Article 562 of the Lebanese penal code, considering that there are several laws that are unjust towards women, which must be amended in order to attain equality pursuant to the Convention signed by Lebanon, and to put pressure on the Lebanese authorities to withdraw the reservation made about certain clauses of the Convention.

V. Active bodies in the governmental and non-governmental sectors

Based on the above, it should be pointed out that the nongovernmental sector has shouldered most of the work in favor of women's rights and their role in society, and in favor of achieving justice between men and women. This sector never slackened in continuing its hard work to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, which constitutes the pressure required for attaining its objectives.

All feminist organizations and human rights associations are concerned with women's affairs and fight to continue their progress. Although they are ramified and are not united to form a substantial pressure mechanism, the results of their work converge on the same center of interest, namely the rights, roles, and obligations of women as human beings and their conformity with the Lebanese legislation and with the international conventions. The private nongovernmental sector played a major role in the eradication of the injustice committed against women in some Lebanese laws, giving them some of their rights.

A. Governmental sector

1. National Commission for Lebanese Women

Feminist organizations called for a cabinet post that deals with women's affairs or a national organization connected to the presidency of the Council of Ministers that strives to elaborate a national strategy for women's rights, to give them executive powers and provide them with a special budget.

In preparation for the Beijing Conference, the National Commission for Lebanese Women was established in 1994. It was composed of members from both governmental and nongovernmental sectors.

After the Beijing Conference and the efficient practical results achieved by the Lebanese delegation, the Lebanese government found that the constitution of this organization was unavoidable. It finally came into being according to another ministerial decree issued in 1996.

In November 1998, a new law (Law n°720) stipulated the creation of the National Commission for Lebanese Women. Upon the issuance of this resolution, the National Committee handed in its resignation. Consequently, the Commission is currently presided by the Lebanese First Lady and it is composed of 24 ladies.

The National Commission was entrusted, by virtue of this resolution, with consultative functions to be performed with the presidency of the Council of Ministers and the other public administrations, in addition to the coordination and connection functions with the different public administrations, civil and nongovernmental institutions, and Arab and international organizations, in the aim of promoting Lebanese women's conditions. Executive functions were added to what preceded, and focused on the elaboration of plans and strategies concerning women's affairs and the execution of programs, activities, studies, and workshops related to women. Furthermore, an adequate administrative structure was established to fulfill these duties.

The Commission's term of office is 3 years renewable. It is headed by a delegate chosen by the President of the Republic. Female Ministers and deputies are considered to be members of the Commission in an advisory capacity. They have consultative, communicative, coordinating and executive functions. The Commission is run by an executive office composed of eight members elected by the general assembly from among the members.

2. Executive branch

The Ministry of Justice played the leading role in the adoption of the drafts presented by the nongovernmental sector. It submitted them and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to the Parliamentary Council to be approved. They were ratified on July 24,1996.

As for the Ministry of Labor, it adopted the amendment of the labor law regarding certain submitted proposals, but nothing has been approved until now.

3. Legislative branch

The tasks of the legislative branch consist of approving the draft laws that are submitted to it and related to women. The Administration and Justice Committee and the Human Rights Committee played an important role in adopting these drafts and in submitting them to the general assembly to be ratified.

The Administration and Justice Committee is today in possession of all the legal articles that constitute discrimination against women and a violation of the Convention. It is hoped that they be approved by the Committee and ratified by the general assembly ; this will be a major achievement at the level of eradicating any discrimination against women in the Lebanese legislation.

4. Judicial branch

The judicial branch applies the laws concerning women. Article 2 of the code of civil procedure has attached paramount importance to the provision of the international conventions regarding the Lebanese law provisions in case of inconsistency with or breach of the international conventions banning discrimination. This was demonstrated in the problems relating to the labor and social security laws.

Judges exclusively apply the discriminatory articles against women, especially those relative to the penal code.

However, the nongovernmental and feminist associations do not have the authority to make personal claims or to intervene to supervise the implementation of human rights, which impedes their work on affairs concerning women's rights.

B. Nongovernmental sector

Only some of the nongovernmental bodies are given here as examples. It is regretted that not all could be mentioned due to lack of space.

1. Lebanese Women's Council

The Lebanese Women's Council is considered to be the fundamental authority of the women's cause. It is composed of a considerable number of nongovernmental feminist associations from different regions (144 associations).

Since its establishment in 1952, it has been taking care of women's affairs, participating in every international conference, and fighting for guaranteeing Lebanese women's rights in various fields.

In view of the failure of the authorities to give women an efficient role in decision-making at the national level and according to Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the recommendations of the Beijing Conference, the Women's Council held a national, regional, and international conference on women's participation in political life. A pioneering idea was brought up ; it suggested giving women a quota in political life, in other words dividing national decision-making into shares. The Women's Council considers this step to be temporary, until the election laws are amended in order to become democratic and nonsectarian on the one hand, and for mentality to evolve and people to be convinced of the necessity of women's participation in the decision-making process, on the other hand.

2. Committee for Following-up on Women's Issues

This Committee was constituted in preparation for the Beijing Conference in which its members participated actively. It consists of union and sectoral associations and organizations concerned with women's issues.

In the wake of the Conference and in view of following through on its recommendations, the Committee:

- Elaborated a solid strategy in collaboration with the former National Committe of Lebanese Women.

- Launched the national campaign for the participation of women in local authorities and in taking and implementing decisions at the national level.

- Conducted the national campaign in collaboration with the Bar Association and launched the Lebanese Instrument for the elimination of discrimination against women. Its major achievement was the adoption of the network system that spread throughout the Lebanese regions, using television, radio and the press to make women aware of their rights and obligations.

3. Committee for Lebanese Women's Rights

Since its founding in 1947, the Committee for Lebanese Women's Rights has been campaigning for women's rights as part of human rights in Lebanon, considering their cause as one of general national causes. This Committee endeavors to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women first by presenting it, second by publishing it and encouraging male and female students to debate the relative issues, and third by launching campaigns for public awareness of women's rights.

The Committee recently made an advanced, comprehensive legal study of the eradication of all discrimination against women in Lebanese legislation. It managed to put forward motions relative to employment, labor, social security, penal and commercial laws. This proposal was adopted by a number of deputies who submitted it as a motion to Parliament. It is currently under consideration by

the Parliamentary Administrative and Justice Committee. The Committee extended its sphere of activity and the Assembly for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was instituted. It brings together active organizations, institutions, and personalities that work for the establishment of justice and equality in Lebanon. The Commission for Lebanese Women's Rights seeks to attain the ratification of the optional civil code of personal status, and has formed a support body for this purpose.

4. Lebanese Human Rights Association

This Association was established in 1985 and it is a member of the Arab Human Rights Organization and of the International Human Rights Federation. It played an important and pioneering role in submitting proposals related to women and to equality between them and men to the Ministry of Justice and to the parliamentary committees. These proposals contributed to the eradication of some forms of discrimination against women in Lebanese legislation, the last proposal being the amendment of Article 562 of the penal code.

5. Lebanese Commission for Fighting Violence against Women

This Commission was established in March 1997, following the session of the Arab Women's Court for Fighting Violence that took place in Beirut on the eve of the Beijing Conference. After the Arab Women's Court for Fighting Violence against Women was founded in December 1996, and after it was based at the headquarters of the Committee for Lebanese Women's Rights, the Lebanese Commission for Fighting Violence against Women was created in March 1997, bringing together many active organizations and personalities.

The Commission has undertaken a gigantic and pioneering task, in an attempt to help battered women and to resolve their problems by opening centers to receive complaints and by installing the first hot line. Moreover, it provides them with free consultations and conducts legal studies based on the situation of battered women and on field experience.

6. National Assembly for an Optional Civil Code of Personal Status

This Assembly constitutes a national rally of Lebanese personalities, associations and parties that endeavor to obtain the ratification of a unified optional civil code of personal status, in which respect they are accomplishing a tremendous job where awareness, information, and publicity are concerned.

It is to be deduced then that the following-up of women's issues and the continuing struggle to attain women's rights have been accomplished through the action of the nongovernmental sector. In fact, this struggle was intensified after the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In order to form a strong lobbying force, these organizations that constitute the nongovernmental sector should coordinate their activities and efforts since they have the same objective and aspirations and since all their undertakings converge. Only through strength and unity will the nongovernmental sector be able to grant women their rights and to eliminate any injustice committed against them.

Furthermore, the existence of the National Commission for Lebanese Women and its endeavor to coordinate its work with the nongovernmental sector and to unite efforts for the cause of women as human beings, have helped to put pressure on Lebanese authorities to assume their responsibilities towards women.

C. Media and publicity

Media play a major role nowadays in the transmission of news and knowledge to the highest percentage of the population. It is not limited by the borders of a given country but extends beyond, encompassing the whole world with the evolution of technology.

After Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Lebanese government did not arrange programs, nor dit it organize colloquiums and lectures, even on its own radio and television stations, to present the Convention and its content to the citizens (men and women), in an attempt to heighten their awareness of their rights and obligations. Nevertheless, it now and then broadcasts, upon the request of feminist or nongovernmental bodies, programs that have allowed them to publicize this Convention. As usual, the nongovernmental and feminist bodies actively advertised this Convention and informed people about it.

Most of them set up committees that traveled the length and breadth of the Lebanese regions giving lectures and organizing colloquiums on women's rights. They held sessions to spread the awareness of these rights through field work, which included men as well as women, since the ignorance of this Convention and of women's rights concerns the entire society, not just women. However, these activities did not reach all the Lebanese but were restricted to a limited public.

Part II
Equality before the law and in civil affairs

I. Civil and legal affairs

A. Constitutional provisions and legislation currently in effect

Article 7 of the Lebanese Constitution provides that all people shall be equal before the law. However, there are some articles that are unfair to women in certain laws, among them the penal code.

There is no text in the law that prevents women from enjoying their civil rights once the texts that discriminate against them in this matter are amended or eliminated.

B. Main aspects of discrimination against women

1. Civil affairs

There is no discrimination against women regarding their civil rights except in the laws related to the articles Lebanon expressed reservations about (citizenship and family relations).

2. Legal affairs

The Lebanese penal code includes provisions that discriminate against women in issues related to :

- Honor crimes
- Adultery
- Abortion
- Assault on honor
- Prostitution

(a) Honor crimes

Article 562 of the Lebanese penal code provides that whoever catches his wife, or one of his parents or offspring, or his sister, in the act of witnessed adultery, or during illegal sexual intercourse, and kills or injures one of them without premeditation, shall benefit from the mitigating excuse; and whoever catches his wife, or one of his parents or offspring, or his sister in a suspicious situation with another person and kills or injures one of them shall benefit from the mitigating excuse.

Article 562, which requires mitigation of the penalty, encourages killing and injuring and contradicts the principles of freedom, justice and equality.

Moreover, this article contradicts not only the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but also all international charters related to human rights.

This, in spite of the struggle of the feminist and nongovernmental organizations that led to the article's amendment pursuant to law n°7 issued on February 20, 1999, which eliminated the releasing excuse and retained the mitigating excuse, but perpetuated honor crimes and discrimination against women, and also in spite of the fact that Lebanon has undertaken in the Convention the elimination of all the penal code provisions that constitute discrimination against women (paragraph (g) of Article 2 of the Convention).

(b) Adultery

Articles 487, 488 and 489 of the penal code discriminate against women with respect to the conditions that establish the crime and the penalty imposed on the adulterer and the adulteress.

A woman shall be considered an adulteress whether the act of adultery has taken place in the marital house or in any other place, whereas the adulterer shall only be punished if the act of adultery has taken place in the marital house, or if he has openly taken to himself a mistress in any place whatsoever.

The penalty imposed on the adulterer shall extend from one month to one year, whereas the adulteress's penalty shall be imprisonment from three months to two years.

The partner of the adulteress shall not be punished in the same way unless he is married, whereas the female partner shall be punished in the same way whether she is married or not.

Moreover, the establishment of proof in adultery cases is also discriminatory. Proof of adultery against the wife shall be established through the testimony of witnesses, or through factual evidence, while her partner in adultery shall be acquitted in absence of letters and written documents sent by him, in other words for lack of legal proof.

The case shall be dropped if the man accepts to resume conjugal life.

The provisions pertaining to adultery in the Lebanese law contradict moral principles, equality as established in the Lebanese Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and international agreements, particularly the Convention ; therefore, the amendment of these provisions must be made in conformity with paragraph (g) of Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against women.

(c) Abortion

Lebanese law prohibits abortion and only allows the termination of pregnancy for medical reasons by virtue of exclusively determined conditions.

The law punishes the call for abortion and the sale of substances intended for generating or facilitating it.

The act of the woman who aborts herself or the act of whoever aborts her with her consent shall be considered as a felony.

Intentional abortion performed without the woman's consent shall be considered as a crime.

Abortion that leads to the woman's death shall be considered as a homicide or a capital crime.

Furthermore, the law imposes severe penalties in relation to the offender, forbidding the perpetrator from practicing his profession or work.

It is to be concluded that the Lebanese law is one of the most severe laws regarding abortion. However, it has not put an end to abortion.

(d) Assault on honor

Some of articles 503-522 of the penal code, which are related to rape, fornication, kidnapping, seduction, immorality, and violation of areas reserved for women, are detrimental to women and expose them to domestic, sexual, and psychological violence.

"Violence" includes:

- The physical, sexual, and psychological violence at home, in society, and at work.
- The physical, sexual, and psychological violence committed or overlooked by the government.

As far as violence at home, in society, or at work is concerned, the law has stipulated penalties for its perpetrator. Still, these penalties fail to give battered women the opportunity to bring an action against somebody without fear or hesitation, or to receive compensations. Moreover, there is a complete lack of an integral and integrated body of trained security forces, social workers, psychologists, and sociologists dedicated to helping battered women to overcome the difficulties they face and to spread awareness in their environment and society.

(e) Prostitution

The legal provisions related to prostitution are those stipulated in the Lebanese penal code for the preservation of public health.

The law regulates the conditions for opening brothels. It submits them to the authorization of the governor, and prohibits men from owning them. It imposes conditions on the female owner of the brothel regarding age and the employment of boys or girls under 18 or of female virgins, as well as

conditions regarding public health, working hours and undergoing medical checkups and treatments on a periodical basis.

The law strictly prohibits secret prostitution and punishes whomever practices it. It also punishes women who engage in solicitation, homosexuals, and whoever seduces a woman or a female minor into fornication.

To date the government has not ratified a law to protect moral standards by closing down brothels.

C. Latest legal developments

Women shall officially be treated on an equal basis with men with respect to their legal capacity to conclude contracts and manage their properties. They shall also be able to receive health care, including contraception, for example, without their husband's permission, except in some remote areas where awareness is either absent or shy with regard to women as well as men.

Women shall have the right to sign contracts for credit, real estate and other properties. They may conclude commercial deals without their husband's permission and under their own name, following the amendment of the code of commerce.

Women shall have the right to manage their properties on an equal basis with men, without their intervention or approval. They shall be free to dispose of the properties as they wish; therefore, they can sell, buy, mortgage and transfer properties without prior approval of their husband, father, or guardian, whether these properties were acquired before or after the marriage.

Women shall be treated on an equal basis with men before the courts. They may sue, be sued, or lodge complaints under their own name. Women shall have the capacity to testify before all courts and governmental institutions and their testimony shall carry as much weight as men's.

Female lawyers shall have the right to represent their clients of both sexes before courts and special judicial bodies and to be members of juries and other bodies composed of citizens. Women may work in the judiciary in the civil courts but not in the religious courts, which remain within the jurisdiction of men, except for the Evangelical denomination where a woman is present in the religious court.

Women and men shall enjoy equal opportunities to benefit from legal services, including the judicial assistance offered free of charge in case they are unable to bear the lawsuit's expenses and the lawyer's fees. All legal matters shall be equally applied to men and women.

Women shall be granted indemnities as men would be in similar circumstances. They shall face the same verdicts as men would in identical circumstances.

Women and men shall have the same legal rights with respect to freedom of movement and choice of domicile. However, traditions and customs restrict women's capacity to exercise this right, since their domicile is first their father's then their husband's. On the other hand, marriage does not limit

women's right to choose to keep their original domicile in case men's financial situation deteriorates, or in case they and their husband find the appropriate domicile. Financial straits and the lack of assistance, especially when the couples have children, are often the main reason that drives women to keep their original domicile.

As to female emigrants who temporarily live and work in other countries, they enjoy the same rights as men.

II. Gender stereotyping

As in all patriarchal societies, the socio-cultural patterns of conduct of women and men (a mainstay of gender) play a decisive role in Lebanese society in the strengthening of the prejudices and practices generating women's inferior position.

These patterns do not match the social reality which has undergone transformations dictated by various civilizational and cultural factors. The disparity between the social reality of women and men and the superstructures that govern this reality is manifest through the following:

- The man is the head of the family according to the law and custom requires that providing support is the basic constituent of his parenthood. Whereas 14% of Lebanese families are currently headed by women, and since 14% of married women work, the man has lost his exclusive right to be the provider and the head of the family.

- Religion and customs impose restrictions and laws on women's personal and family status, which put them in a dependent, if not inferior, position.

- Women are still considered almost exclusively responsible for housekeeping, raising children, and caring for the elderly, the handicapped and the sick, even though their partners, men, are no longer the sole providers of the families they support together.

- Our social culture is witnessing a decline in the stereotyped classification of males and females in education and in the media. However, the main aspects of this stereotyping are still prevalent, and measures taken to abate it are either non-existent (media) or insufficient (education). Moreover, these measures are by no means included in the general governmental policy.

- With the exception of a few professions (minework, the alcohol industry, handling heavy machinery, asphalt manufacturing, etc.), Lebanese law does not expressly "prohibit" either sex from having a job. Nevertheless, the widespread stereotyped notions concerning women and men are responsible for the orientation of females towards "appropriate" specializations and professions, the most important being education and health, and away from other specializations and professions.

- When boys, except those who work, devote themselves to studying or to playing, girls in most families help their mothers, or sometimes replace her in doing the chores, in looking after the children and the sick, etc, which generally affects their schoolwork.

- Stipulating a dowry or a material payment for the bride in the marriage-related practices of Lebanese society is declining and is subject to personal status laws. Among the "guileful" means men resort to in order to evade paying the deferred amount of the dowry are battery, subjugation, compelling and pressuring women into abandoning them.

The denominationally-structured society entrusts religious figures with people's affairs in order to administer their family and personal status. Their authority is sacred for it is firmly established and is rarely concerned with the real and material changes that family structure and family members have undergone as a result of cultural evolution. On the contrary, religion acts sometimes as a brake on the socio-cultural expressions that are in harmony with the changing reality.

One of the aspects of this reality is a change, although partial, in the status of women ; therefore, their roles no longer fall in line with the stereotyped image, or with the gender-based classifications and their legislative and especially legal consequences. Legislation is undertaken by the spiritual (religious) courts.

Religious ideologies have a great impact on establishing and defining gender roles in patriarchal cultures ; however, custom, tradition, and society's consumption trends have equally important influence. In between these factors there are also multiple channels that strive to establish and define these roles, starting with family education, then with general methods of education, and finally with media.

A. Family

The Lebanese family is witnessing a metamorphosis in its structure, dictated by various interlinked factors, the most important being urbanization, the decreasing number of family members, female education, working women, and a percentage of over 14% of Lebanese families headed by women. This transformation generates an impact on the stereotyped roles for men and women, whose final contours have not yet been defined. Most probably, the transformation takes different forms in accordance with intermediary changes (social/economic class, rural/urban belonging, etc). Moreover the notion of the "sanctity of the home" is still prevailing, which hampers society's direct intrusion in their affairs and in the relationships among their members. Therefore, and for the first time, the National Commission for Fighting Violence against Women is talking about laying down laws or taking actions that monitor education or practices and behaviors, as a preventative measure. As for talk about ratifying laws of family education that allow the gender-related stereotyped classifications to decrease, it needs society's and the legislators' awareness of its necessity, as well as the effort of the feminist forces and their organizations in order to rise to the required level.

However, it does not take long for the aforementioned "sanctity" to be violated from the inside in cases of domestic violence, perversity, or crime, and in cases of psychological illness or divorce; but

in all cases, gender stereotyping is manifest. It gives an unrealistic picture of women, which is most probably inherited and not yet subjected to current tests.

Whereas the woman/wife is commonly called the "lady of the house," divorce, notwithstanding its motives, divests her of this "title." The main manifestation of her divestment is probably her deprivation of the right to participate in the upbringing of her children (she is allowed custody for a limited number of years). This includes two stereotyped conceptions about women : capable and powerful (her power over the children is sometimes exclusive and absolute) as long as she is a party in the couple, and her transformation into a powerless and unfit woman. For divorce deprives her of this supremacy as soon as the marriage is dissolved.

The few studies known to have been made on this subject in Lebanon show the equal connection of perversity, crime and psychological illness with the failure to adapt to the stereotyped picture of women or, respectively, with over-adaptation.

B. Methods of education

When writing the general educational objectives, the persons in charge neglected to include the struggle against discrimination or sexism among the struggles against other discriminations (religious, racial). However, the detailed objectives of some courses have shown the importance of fighting stereotypes in general and gender-based ones in particular. Furthermore, the incorporation of the clauses of the United Nations resolutions into civics in higher and pre-university education will necessarily bring up the conventions relative to women.

On the other hand, the governmental supervisors of the writing of the national schoolbook have given the authors of its various courses instructions asking them to keep a vigilant eye on their prejudices or their gender-related blindness, but they did not receive any training to sharpen their sensitivity to gender. Consequently, the result of their work was not completely consistent with the supervisors' wishes.

C. Media

In the field of media, and especially television, two facts related to women come together : the frequency of their appearance, and the slackening presentation of their cause. The frequency referred to falls under the gender-related and stereotyped classifications according to which women are magnets for viewers. They often present programs but rarely prepare or direct them. The female body (and its movements) remains a promotional commodity more than the male. Studies of women's image in media point to two phenomena :

- The hegemony of the stereotyped picture of women as a sex object, a mother, a housewife, a consumer, or as a promoter of consumption.

- The low participation of media women in the high positions in the hierarchical succession of their profession, despite the higher percentage of their presence in this field in the last years

(84%), and their steering towards programs and matters characterized by being less influential on directing and determining public opinion or the profession.

An insignificant aspect in comparison with their skills and training as media women stands out concerning their profession. It is their physical attractiveness which constitutes an important and sometimes necessary factor for their professional promotion. Numerous rumors affect media women and harm their professional and personal reputation.

In another respect, media in Lebanon is characterized by the absence of the social and cultural realm, including the women's cause in both its cultural and social aspects.

It should not be forgotten that the private mass media, which are more numerous and influencial, rarely undertake causes that do not fulfill the gain criteria. Whereas these media are linked to the promotion of consumption and excitement that are related to their role, and to bringing into view the stereotyped images of women, which is what interests us here, it is therefore difficult to ask the supervisors of the private media to voluntarily abide by Article (5) of the Convention. This engagement is perhaps essentially useless in the presence of the widespread and out-of-control telecommunication satellites.

On the other hand, the present government is obliged to support the official media, especially television. Consequently, it could be somewhat freed from the requirements of the competitive market, to better express the general socio-cultural susceptibilities of the government, including policy related to women in which the government has engaged itself. Policies can be translated into educational and cultural programs oriented to everybody, and mainly to women, to fight against the prevailing stereotyped picture.

The government can also create a methodical monitoring mechanism for all kinds of programs (journalistic writing and broadcast reading), in order to purge them of the manifestations of fanaticism based on the sex and gender stereotyping.

Within the same framework, we point out the role of the media-related departments in the various universities in general and at the Lebanese (national) University in particular, where male and female media students are trained (the number of female students being higher than males). In fact, the courses of study at the Lebanese University, for example, do not explicitly define course content, leaving the professors free to choose the subjects. The classifications adopted in the contemporary university education (development media, entertainment media, culture media, etc.) are overlooked. The political media still prevail, which barely leaves enough space for other fields to exist.

Furthermore, in the absence of higher education in the media-related departments at the Lebanese University, for example, there lacks a research center similar to those in other departments which carry out research in the other fields. Although their level of seriousness is inconsistent, these research endeavors establish a primary research base which contributes to the understanding of media tendencies, and behaviors among the concerned parties (senders and receivers). Since the number of females in these departments is increasing, we expect a greater importance to be attached to women's

causes at the level of research and studies, as well as expression in the media which goes beyond the traditional stereotyped expressions and seeks to be in more conformity with the current status of women.

D. Violence against women

The "sanctity of the home" requires, among other things, disregard of violence committed within. It is only made public in exceptional cases such as misdemeanor or crime. The woman, wife, daughter, or sister is the object of this violence in most cases. The media, particularly television, have contributed, either by denunciation or through talk shows, to publicizing the presence of domestic violence and to break the wall of silence which encircles it. The impact was direct and it gave women victims of violence (children as well) the courage to denounce it. This is mainly indicated in the increase of the cases of violence filed with the security forces as the following table shows according to the statistics of the Directorate of the Internal Security Forces :

Year	Number of Rapes	Indecent Assault or Sexual Harassment
1994	86	81
1995	138	101
1996	113	155
1997	114	281

The positive laws that deal with violence, rape, or indecent assault issues do not take into consideration their actual phenomena. Nongovernmental groups and organizations strive to make studies in order to modernize these laws so they take into account the current different phenomena and inconsistencies of these issues.

Taking interest in violence victims is on the list of priorities of the Ministry of Social Affairs. However, this Ministry doesn't have the means to intervene except through social work. Furthermore, there is no mechanism for transfering victims of violence or sexual assault from police stations or courts to the Ministry, which does not possess enough human resources or special commission, or a shelter to accommodate victims and follow their situations.

Nevertheless, the Ministry officials consider themselves responsible for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and put the matter of accommodating and caring for them on upcoming agendas. The Lebanese Commission for Fighting Violence against Woman was established in the wake of the Beijing conference. It is the sole body in Lebanon concerned with this issue. It works closely with the "Arab Court" and contributes to the implementation of its programs.

This body receives through a hot line, or directly, the complaints of battered women and undertakes their treatment in the best way possible, in other words by submitting these complaints to committees of male or female doctors, psychologists or lawyers. Female social workers also accompany battered women throughout the process of overcoming their ordeal.

In fact, Lebanon does not have a shelter to accommodate battered women. The Commission seeks to ensure one for this purpose by getting in touch with the persons in charge of social affairs or with private organizations, religious orders being one of them.

The aforementioned Commission endeavors to get in touch with governmental officials to draw their attention to the issue. However, it is often faced with indifference, or with an attempt to close the subject in order to cut short its discussion, or sometimes with the denial of the existence of domestic violence in the first place.

On the other hand, the Commission is facing pressure from two sources:

- The increase in the number of battered women who experience, for the first time, the possibility of having recourse to a public body to handle their cause.

- The interested men and women who wish to join the Commission and be active members, especially female university students.

In the first case, the pressure surpasses the assimilation possibility of the Commission, and in the second, it goes beyond its ability to put more people on the payroll. At present, the Committee is working on the preparation of a program to train its managerial staff for the development of its organizational structure.

The Commission deals with the media carefully for fear that the subject would lapse into excitement. In return, it works on five cooperating levels : research, education, documentation, information, and mobilization, in addition to their active work on the program of the Arab Court that is presently launching a campaign for women's rights.

III. Citizenship and Naturalization

A. Constitutional and legislative provisions currently in effect

The Lebanese government expressed reservation concerning paragraph 2 of Article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This reservation confirms that the Lebanese citizenship and naturalization laws discriminate against women.

According to the resolution n° 15 dated January 19, 1925 of the law issued on November 1, 1960, whoever is born of a Lebanese father regardless of his place of birth shall be considered a Lebanese citizen.

The child shall retain his/her father's nationality even if the father loses it later while the child is a minor. The natural child in case his/her filiation is proved while he/she is still a minor, if one of the parents whose filiation was first proved is Lebanese, shall also be considered Lebanese.

Citizenship shall be acquired through motherhood in the following cases :

- The minor born of a foreign mother who acquired Lebanese citizenship after the death of her foreign husband.

- Lebanese law granted the Lebanese husband the right to give his foreign wife Lebanese citizenship one year after the registration date of the marriage at the census office and pursuant to her request. Lebanese law allows the person to acquire another citizenship in addition to his Lebanese one.

- Women in Lebanon, regardless of their marital situations, enjoy an equal right with men to acquire, retain or change their citizenship. In principle, marriage to an alien should not affect women's citizenship. The rule is that they retain their Lebanese citizenship and loose it only voluntarily. They can reacquire it after the annulment of the marriage, for any reason whatsoever.

B. Main aspects of discrimination against women

The Lebanese woman who marries a foreigner and retains or reacquires her citizenship is not able to give it to her children as the man married to a foreigner has the right to.

The foreign husband of a Lebanese woman shall not enjoy equal rights as to obtaining residence and work permits, while the foreign wife of a Lebanese man shall enjoy more rights a year after she acquires the Lebanese citizenship; then, her residence shall be legal. She shall not be required to get a residence permit and shall be able to work and benefit from benefits and job securities like the Lebanese woman.

The citizenship of the child shall be decided pursuant to the Lebanese law exclusively through blood ties. Therefore, the Lebanese mother shall be deprived of her right as a citizen to grant her children her citizenship.

Minors shall be able to hold their own passports, and yet the father's approval is needed to include the children in their mother's passport.

C. Developments in citizenship and naturalization issues

Many feminist associations, and in particular the Lebanese Human Rights Association, have set forth many studies demanding that the child benefit from Lebanese citizenship if one of his/her parents (his/her father or mother) is Lebanese. Their demand was based on the provisions of the Lebanese Constitution and on the convention on the Rights of Children ratified by Lebanon, and which prohibits the stateless situation of children. It was also based on the same naturalization law which allows the foreign mother who acquires the Lebanese citizenship after the death of her foreign husband to give the citizenship to her minor children, and on the decision of the Lebanese Court of Cassation which has not found an excuse to discriminate between Lebanese born and foreign women.

Their demand was also made on the basis of justice, equity and the intent of the legislator who wanted to safeguard family integrity, as well as on the main reason, which is that the children of a Lebanese woman who live with her in Lebanon should be completely integrated in the Lebanese society and should not have another national belonging.

Moreover, the claim of these associations was also grounded on the contradiction of this article's text, which in turn contradicts the modern tendencies acknowledging the right of the child to the citizenship of any of his/her parents, and taking into consideration the child's best interest. However, the activity of these nongovernmental organizations is still in abeyance, although the Parliamentary Administrative and Justice Committee has been studying it since December 1995.

Minors can not leave the country even under the father's or the mother's passport except with both parent's approval. They can leave the country with the mother's sole approval if the husband is outside Lebanon, if he is suffering from a disease that prevents him from giving his approval, or if there is a dispute between the married couple. Nevertheless, the census office stresses today on requesting mutual approval to issue passports. The mother may give her passport to her minor children to use upon her and the father's mutual approval.

Women can obtain a passport and leave the country without their husband's approval, unless there is a marital or legal judgment that forbids them from travelling.

IV. Labor and economy

A. Constitutional and legislative provisions currently in effect

1. Right to work and to employment opportunities

The labor law and the legislative decree n°112 of the Employment Act and regulations do not discriminate against women in the right to work and to employment opportunities. Nevertheless, there is at the same time a lack of legislative measures that promote equality between women and men in employment opportunities.

2. Remuneration

The Employment Act does not discriminate against female civil servants with regard to salaries in the public sector (equal remuneration for work of equal value). Moreover, the labor law has approved equal remuneration for work of equal value for female and male workers. However, the practice in the private sector differs sometimes from the legal texts, and thus some female workers, because of dire financial needs, are compelled to sign work contracts which are inconsistent with the going salaries in circulation.

3. Job security

(a) Right to job security

Each worker in both the public and private sectors has a right to job security, but the practice differs with varying degrees from the laws and regulations in some fields.

(b) Job continuation

Article 29 prohibits the employer from dismissing or threatening job dismissal of women during pregnancy, unless it is proved that they were employed elsewhere during the period referred to. However, Article 52 allows the employer to notify pregnant women prior to the fifth month of pregnancy, which threatens the future of pregnant workers and contradicts the essence of the international Convention.

4. Maternity leave

Article 82 of the labor law set the maternity leave for female workers in the private sector at forty days, whereas Article 38 of the legislative decree n°112, which was amended pursuant to law n°48, granted female civil servants in the public sector a sixty-day maternity leave. On the other hand, Article 15 of the decree n° 5883 gave pregnant salaried employees who work in public administration a forty-day fully-paid maternity leave.

There is a disparity in maternity leaves, among female civil servants, salaried employees in public administration, and workers. Moreover, it should be pointed out that Lebanon has not yet ratified Article 103 of the ILO conventions regarding maternity leave.

Note : Lebanese law did not make allowance for paternity leave to enable men to participate in family responsibilities, and particularly in the upbringing of children.

5. Childcare

Article 34 of the labor law allowed for a positive discrimination which gives working women the right to rest for no less than an hour whenever the working hours are over five. This way they can breast-feed and take care of the children.

6. Health protection and safety in the workplace

Article 27 of the labor law prohibits the hiring of women in industries and jobs that badly affect their health, the health of the fetus, if the woman is pregnant, and the health of the children.

7. Bank loans and mortgages

There is no discrimination against women in the regulations of bank loans and mortgages.

B. Main aspects of discrimination against women

The main aspects of discrimination against women which are established by the Lebanese law in the fields of labor and economy are:

1. Social benefits and welfare

(a) Welfare

Article 3 of the legislative decree n° 3950 of the Employment Act and Article 46 of the social security law, both of which have given male civil servants or workers the right to benefit from welfare, have also wronged female civil servants or workers and denied them the benefits enjoyed by men, eventhough women's contributions are equal to men's.

(b) Dismissal and retirement regulations

Article 62 of the decree n° 74 of the retirement and dismissal regulations has divested the family members of deceased female civil servants of benefiting from their retirement pension, except under specific conditions.

(c) Health care and hospitalization

Article 10 of the benefits and services regulations at the State employees' cooperative and Article 14 of the social security law have discriminated against women as regards benefits for their family members in the fields of health care, hospitalization and other social benefits, eventhough women's contributions are equal to men's.

2. Type of work

The labor law establishes the type of work women may exercise, thereby discriminating against them in favor of male workers. Article 26 prohibits the hiring of women in all mechanical and manual industries. It appoints specific working hours for women without leaving them the freedom to choose the type and schedule of the work, eventhough the work may be done by any worker (whether male or female) if he or she choose to.

3. Unorganized sector

Article 7 of the labor law excludes workers in the agricultural sector as well as domestic helpers (mostly women). Moreover, the labor and social security laws do not include workers in the unorganized sector.

C. Latest legal developments

Since Lebanon ratified the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in July 1996, no amendment has been made to the labor and social security laws nor to the Employment Act and regulations.

In April 1999, a certain number of deputies adopted the motions proposed by the Commission for Lebanese Woman Rights calling for the amendment of articles in five laws (the labor law, the social security law, the Employment Act, the commercial law and the penal law), in conformity with the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Some deputies presented the motion to the Parliament. It was then submitted to the Administration and Justice Committee and later the Council of ministers transferred it to the competent Ministries to put forward an opinion. Work is presently underway at the various levels to ratify the proposed amendments.

D. Developments at the level of women's economic activity

1. Participation of women in economic activity

The last two decades witnessed an improvement of highst magnitude in the general indicators related to the situation of women. In fact, the indicators of female entrances to schools and universities recorded high increases, which sometimes exceeded men's, as shown by recent field studies. The female economic activity rates also rose in most age groups, including those older than the average age for marriage, which is higher today than in the seventies. In view of this improvement that coincided with a marked decline in female illiteracy rates, women's economic activities became more diversified than in the seventies and female unemployment rates headed for stability, if not reduction. However, is this general improvement in the statistical indicators enough to conclude, without hesitation, that the government and society have succeeded in providing educational and professional preparations for women to join the development process? It surely cannot be asserted that this objective has been reached for many interrelated reasons.

What mostly attracts the attention on the subject of women's work is perhaps the disproportion between how much society spends on their education, which barely equals the money spent on men's education, and their current activity rates, which remain, despite their amelioration, relatively low.

In fact, women are not responsible for this imbalance. One of its important aspects is due to the economic growth system and to the employments and investments system. They both have historically been dominated by a unilateral feature and specialization for the most part in the domains of real estate and rents domains. Owing to their nature, these two systems did not encourage expansion in the creation of employment opportunities for women or for men, unlike the extremely diversified and intricate growth and employment systems that prevailed in the developed countries. Add to that another major obstacle represented in the imbalance by the loopholes in the educational system and the requirements of the labor market, which affect women as well as men.

The percentage of female workers in relation to the total number of women (of all ages) increased from 9.5% in 1970 to 14.7% in 1997. The bulk of this improvement was more the result of objective demographic factors than that of a comprehensive development plan with clear outlines and defined objectives or that of an important strengthening of society's awareness in general, a result linked to the higher educational level, to the relative change in society's attitude towards women's work and to the aftermath of Lebanon's devastating war.

It should be pointed out that despite the long years of war, as well as the deterioration of the economic conditions and their impact on the situation of women, and despite the increase in the number of women entering the work force and in the family's need of additional resources to ensure the necessities of life, a tribute must be paid to certain women who entered the world of work and economy because of their awareness of their duties towards their country ; and some of them met with success at work.

It is obvious that most women work as salaried employees, to a greater extent than men. It is also noticed that the number of women choosing this line of work varies among Lebanese geographic areas. Whereas the percentage of female economic activity was 21.7% in 1997 at the national level (in the age range 15 - 64), it reached its highest levels in Beirut (35.1%) and in Mount Lebanon (23.7%) and its lowest levels in the Bekaa (12.1%), Nabatiyeh (15%), the North (18.7%) and the South (17.4%).

2. Educational level of working women

The distribution of the working population according to educational level shows that most working women are university graduates (29.1%) or high school graduates (26.8%), while most males are university graduates 13.7% and high school graduates 5.7%. The percentage of working men who have certificates from elementary schools (31.8%) or intermediate schools (22.3%) is on the rise, which points to the importance of education as a means to clear the work horizons for working women.

Professional education is starting to draw females after their entrance rate was considerably low, and particularly since society began accepting this interest. The percentage of women is also increasing in the high levels of private professional education. Nevertheless, the illiteracy rate among working women remains higher than among working men.

3. Types of work done by women

In view of the obvious decrease in female illiteracy rates, women's economic activities became somewhat more diversified than in the seventies. Despite the improvement in women's work, which is represented by their larger participation in economic activity between 1970 and 1997, the situation of women at work barely evolved. In fact, neither the percentage of self-employed women nor the percentage of female employers witnessed a marked increase between 1970 and 1997 as the following table shows. The only improvement was the augmentation in the percentage of women who work as

permanent employees from 51% in 1970 to 72.5% in 1997, and the drop in the percentage of what is called "domestic aid" (i.e unpaid work) from 19.4% to 4.6%.

Economically active population according to the situation at work and to sex during the given years

(Percentage)

	1997		1970	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
Self-employed	11.6	29.6	11.8	26.6
Employer	1.5	9.2	1.4	8.9
Permanent Employee	72.5	39.6	51	35
Other Employee	9.1	18.5	14.7	23.5
Domestic aid	4.6	1.9	19.4	4
Trainee or Other	0.7	1.3	1.7	2

Source: The work force in Lebanon and family living standards, 1997.

The majority of women work in the service sector, which claims about 62.6% of the total number of working women, followed by the commerce sector (14.4% of working women) and industry (14.7%), and 4% of the total number of women work in the agricultural sector.

The percentage of women's participation in the industrial sector decreased from 20.2% in 1970 to 14% in 1996, while their participation in the commerce and service sectors increased.

At present, a certain number of working women have started embarking on sectors women never engaged in before, since they were restricted to men, such as supervising the functioning of machines and equipments in industrial enterprises and assuming high administrative tasks.

The percentage of women in the category of executives is still negligible (1.96 of the total number of working women). It is also low in the categories of service professions (5.04%), farmers (1.45%), miners (0.12%), workers in mineral constructions (0.16%), workers who steer vehicles and winches (0.14%), salespersons and employees (11.08%) and in the categories of intermediate professions in the technical and medical professions (13.11%) and management staff (11.62%). On the other hand, the majority of men monopolize the categories of executives (91.5%), specialists (72%), salesmen (81%), farmers, skilled and unskilled workers.

The other studies showed that a great number of the female labor force is concentrated in the sector of specialists (24.3%), and in the intermediate professions (24.8%).

The percentage of working women in the education sector rose from 51.7% of the total number of workers in this sector in 1970 to 68.24% in 1996. This percentage constitutes 23.2% of the female labor force. Female teachers represent the majority of working women in the specialist sector 62.2%.

4. Distribution of working women by age group and duration of work

The age distribution of working women in Lebanon shows a main concentration in the age groups between 25-39,since the percentage of the female economic activity of the young age range 15-19 decreases to 5.8%, reaching its highest levels in the age range 25-29 (34.4%) and then it starts to drop.

This does not apply to the men's economic activity rate, which gradually grows from 36.6% for the age range 15-19 to reach its highest level which is 97.9% in the age range 35-39.

On the other hand, the participation of women in work drops after the age of thirty, which mostly reflects the augmentation of the responsibilities born by women as a result of marriage, childbearing, and housework.

As for the continuation of work according to age groups, the available information shows that women of most age groups have a permanent job. Seasonal and intermittent work increases particularly among the age range 10-19 and 60 and above. This could be attributed to the fact that women in the first age group are busy acquiring an education for a long period of the year, while in the second they undertake agricultural and unorganized work.

Distribution of women according to the duration of work
(Age Groups)

Age Group	Nature of Work			
	Permanent	Seasonal	Intermittent	Total
10-19	78.6	13.9	7.5	100.0
20-29	92.6	3.6	3.8	100.0
30-39	90.8	2.9	6.3	100.0
40-49	87.9	5.3	6.8	100.0
50.59	80.9	8.1	11.0	100.0
60 and above	68.1	15.0	16.9	100.0
Total	88.8	4.9	6.3	100.0

Source: The situation of the Lebanese woman from 1970 to 1995: Figures and Meanings, The National Commission of Women, 1997

5. Women in the public sector

Despite the efficient participation of women in the various fields of development, their virtual absence is noticeable in the first category of public administration.

Percentage of the participation of women in the first, second and third categories of public administration

Category	Males	Females	Total	Female Percentage	Gender Rate
First	124	2	126	1.6	0.01
Second	329	30	359	8.4	0.09
Third	1530	400	1930	20.7	0.26

Source: The Civil Service Council, 1999.

It is important to examine some statistics of certain governmental administrations :

First category :

- Females constitute 1.587% of the first category employees in the public administration (2 out of 126).
- One woman (general manager originally) and a second (general manager by proxy).
- 18% of the Judicial Council are women.
- 14% of the State Council are women.

Second category :

- Females constitute 8.35% of the second category employees in the public administration (30 out of 359) and 4.7% of the employees who were promoted from the third category to the second between 1991 and 1998 (15 women out of 334).
- This number was mainly distributed among the presidency of the Council of Ministers, Inspection, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Housing and Cooperatives.

Third category :

The percentage of women has reached:

- 20.8% of the third category employees in the public administration (400 out of 1530).
- 73.2% of the students of the Administration Institute (sessions 16-17-18).
- 12.6% of doctors employed in the public administration.

- 3.1% of engineers employed in the public administration.

- 40.1% of the total employees who joined the third category between 1989 and 1998. This percentage is considerably high in comparison with the 8.1% registered in 1993.

The massive presence of women among the employees of the third category at the governmental palace (11 women out of 12 employees), in the control bodies, and in the financial positions (expenditure controller, financial controller and chief tax- controller) should be mentioned.

Note : The statistics mentioned in the report show that the percentage of women working in the education sector is very high. However , this active participation is not in conformity with the presence of women in public administration at the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports. In fact, they represent only 25% of the third category.

6. Women working in the unorganized sector

Statistics on employment in the marginal sector are unavailable in Lebanon, and yet this sector provides work for many low-income families. Different studies point to the predominance of the salaried labor force over liberal professions. In addition to this work, women exercise other activities that witnessed a great evolution which started during the war and is still going on. Nevertheless, this work is not counted in the development effort nor in the labor force. What's more, it is not included in the official classification of labor, but it constitutes a large contribution to the development process in view of its productive and social value.

Women also exercise other types of work, which are not given much consideration, and are traditionally known as "unorganized" or marginal work. Consequently, although they are economic, this kind of work falls outside the recognized production boundaries. Some industries hire female assembly workers and janitorial workers.

7. Self-employed women

A large percentage of female specialists who are self-employed hold university degrees (law, political sciences, economy, business management, engineering, medicine, pharmacy) and a considerable number own commercial enterprises.

The majority of self-employed women work in small family businesses that employ less then five workers. Information shows that the characteristic features of most enterprises belonging to women are developmental and manifest through the employment of women in rural areas for their skills in traditional arts and handicrafts, or in preparing natural and healthy products (foods and other).

These categories of women who are self-employed or who work in the "unorganized" sector are confronted by many problems, the most important being :

- The need for financing, marketing problems and competition.

- The differences between the cash payment system upon purchase and the money collecting system upon sale (usually delayed)

- The instability of income due to the seasonal work of the majority.

- The inconsistency of vocational training with the enterprise's needs.

- The absence of a general and economic support framework in the development of small and medium-sized firms.

- The absence of regulations that govern these forms of work. Moreover, working women do not profit from social benefits such as social security, sick leave and paid leave.

- The disproportionate, uncontrolled and legally unaccounted-for salary level.

8. Unemployment

The official total unemployment rate is between 8.1% and 8.9% (1997), while the female unemployment rate is 7.2% against 9% for men (over 15).

The unemployment rates reach their climax among females in the age range 15-19 (21.6% of the total number of females in this age group) and then it gradually decreases with age to reach about 2.2% between 55-59.

It should not go without mention that the unemployment rate in the rural areas is 5.33% and is slightly less in the urban areas (5.69%).

In addition to the aforementioned, it should be stressed that there exists a disguised unemployment that is not mentioned among the preceding statistics.

Unemployment rate according to age, sex and the residence governorate

Age Group and Sex	Total Lebanon	Bekaa	Naba-tiyeh	South	North	Mount Lebanon excluding suburbs	Suburbs of Beirut	Beirut
19-15								
Males	29.7	32.4	34.5	23.8	32.3	35.7	27.9	20.3
Females	21.6	21.2	50	22.9	22.7	11.5	20.6	25.9
20-24								
Males	20.1	27.8	19.9	16.7	21.9	17.8	14.7	20.1
Females	11.5	10.1	11.4	12	19.1	12.8	8.8	9.3
25-29								
Males	9.7	10.7	13.8	10.3	8.8	8.5	9.4	10
Females	7.3	5.9	3.5	4.8	7	9.9	8.9	4.8
30-34								
Males	5.6	4.5	7	4.1	5.4	4.1	7.5	6.5
Females	7.5	2.8	6.8	-	17.6	5.1	6.8	9
35-39								
Males	3.7	3	4.3	4.4	3.6	3.9	4	3.1
Females	5.6	-	-	1.3	3	6.3	5.1	14.3
55-59								
Males	2.7	1.8	0.9	2.5	2.4	2	5.9	0.7
Females	2.2	-	-	-	2.9	3.4	2.2	3.7
15-64								
Males	9	10.7	9.6	9.1	10.6	7	8.6	7.5
Females	7.2	5.5	4.4	5.5	9.1	7.7	7	8

Source: Family living standards 1997, the Central Administration of Statistics.

E. Women and unions

The unions' law does not discriminate against women as regards affording them the opportunity to join unions, whether at the level of membership or leadership. However, the reality shows that despite the relative increase in women's participation in union work during the last years, their presence in the leading bodies of certain trade unions and leagues is still weak.

1. Women in the teaching profession

The available information indicates that, despite the higher proportion of women entering the teaching profession, their presence in the professors' leagues and in the teachers' union in private schools, as well as in the full-time professors' league at the Lebanese University, is not in conformity with this percentage, as the following table shows :

Percentage of women in the leading teachers' and professors' leagues

Staff	Males	Females	Total	Percentage	Gender Rate
League of secondary school teachers	17	1	18	5.55	0.06
League of primary school teachers in Beirut	10	5	15	33.3	0.5
League of primary school teachers in the North	14	1	15	6.66	0.07
League of primary school teachers in Mount-Lebanon	11	4	15	26.66	0.4
League of primary school teachers in the Bekaa	15	-	15	-	Zero
League of primary school teachers in the South	14	1	15	6.66	0.07
The private school teachers Union	11	1	12	8.33	0.09

Source: The Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports, the Teachers' Board in Lebanon.

We note the absence of women in the executive committee of the full-time professors' leagues at the Lebanese University (knowing that they have an active presence in the various faculties and institutes). They are represented by a percentage of 3.8% in the council of delegates.

2. Women in professional associations

The percentage of women practicing liberal professions and joining professional associations is growing, particularly in the medical, pharmaceutical, engineers and Bar associations, as well as in the journalists' and editors' unions. However, the low participation rate of women in the councils and subordinate chief bodies of these associations and unions is noted.

3. Women in trade unions

The participation of active women in union work is generally low, and yet it is high in some unions, (the tailors' union for example). However, women are almost completely absent from the chief bodies, since no female presence is noted in the executive office of the General Trades Union, which comprises all trade unions and includes in its work programs the women's cause, and since there is only one woman in the Union's executive council. Women constitute a percentage of 8.3% (1 out of

12) in the executive office of the National Federation of Trade unions and 2.5% in its executive council (1 out of 44).

F. Violence against women

Dealing with the subject of violence against women is recent in Lebanon as it was generally brought up in 1995 during the organization of the first Arab hearing for women exposed to violence. It was set within the framework of the preparation for the Beijing Conference and with Lebanon's essential contribution of the Permanent Arab Court for Fighting Violence against Women, which is based at the headquarters of the Committee for Lebanese Women's Rights in Beirut.

The Lebanese Commission for Fighting Violence against Women was established and it contributed to launching the violence cause as a social cause in Lebanon. The Committee then installed the first hot line to receive the complaints of women exposed to violence. Indeed, these women meet many difficulties in attempting to put an end to their suffering, starting with the traditional culture, which tends strongly to hold women responsible for the violence, to the failure of the laws in force and of the justice systems to define violence and to create control mechanisms. If domestic violence (physical and psychological) is one of the most conspicuous kinds of violence committed against women, violence at work is one of its other forms. It is concentrated primarily on "real" salaries, promotion, training, and retraining. Moreover, sexual harassment is widespread.

Among the main obstacles to the abolition of violence are the absence of repressive laws and of judicial and executive systems to implement them, and the lack of governmental programs and policies to be carried out in collaboration with the nongovernmental organizations, in order to empower women and to heighten their awareness.

G. Support networks

The Ministry of Social Affairs plays a related role in the support of childcare, and it often coordinates its work with the nongovernmental organizations. Indeed, a certain number of NGOs and individuals have undertaken the construction of nurseries and kindergartens in the large cities and in some villages, but they do not cover all the Lebanese regions, nor do they answer all the needs.

There are 148 nurseries in Lebanon located in the large cities and distributed as follows:

- 25% subordinate to the nongovernmental associations.
- 65.5% owned by individuals.
- 9.5% subordinate to the governmental sector.

To date the government has not approved an official plan in this respect, nor did it establish laws that bind the institutions of the official and nongovernmental sectors to build nurseries and kindergartens, enabling working women to combine their work responsibilities with their family obligations.

The following table shows the distribution of the social services that are considered to be support networks for child-care, according to their type and location.

Social services offered in 1998 by the Ministry of Social Affairs in support of women's and the family's work

Services Governorates	Nursery	Medical Social center	Training Center	Center for the Handicapped	Library for Visually impaired Persons	Documentation and Research Center for Women	Documentation and Research Center	Social Services Center	Nursing Home	Center for Male and Female Delinquents	Rehabilitation center for drug Addicts	Center for the Rehabilatation of Difficult Social Cases	Violenter Prevention Center	Handicrafts Center	Family Planning Center	Total
Beirut	5	10	1	4	1	1	1	1	1			1	1			27
Mount Lebanon	11	62		4				6		1	1					85
North	6	40		3				5		1						55
South	10	24		2				7						1	1	45
Nabatieh	6	14			1			3						1		25
Bekaa	2	17		4				8								28
Total	43	167	1	14	2	1	1	30	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	269

Source : The Ministry of Social Affairs

H. Problems and obstacles facing working women

Working women are confronted by many problems and obstacles at work. The most important are:

- Women are still subjected to different forms of discrimination at work, including work conditions and the assignment of specific kinds of functions and activities to them.
- Discrimination at the level of social benefits.
- A misrepresentation in the fields of scientific specializations, of which the most efficient and productive are still claimed by men.
- Women are not given the chance to participate in the elaboration of economic policies and to reach decision-making levels.
- Women's revenues are low in general according to the latest statistical research. Low salaries are actually the main obstacle confronting women's work, followed by the unavailability of promotion opportunities and benefits.
- Working women do not profit sufficiently and fairly from the available networks of security forces.
- The economic activity rate of women is still low in comparison with the marked improvement in their educational level.
- The absence of legal control and reprimand.
- Marriage still constitutes sometimes an obstacle to women's continuation of their work because of the absence of objective support factors, and since they do not share their family obligations, in addition to the socio-cultural legacy pertaining to this subject.
- The viewpoint of society regarding women's work.
- Family pressures, which slacken relatively the higher the women's educational level becomes, and the more society becomes aware of their role as citizens.
- The shortage of support networks for women.

V. Rural women

If the definition of rural areas is based first on the small size of their population, second on the pattern of the primary relationships that govern life and authority in the local society, and third on the priority of the activities in the primary productive sector of the economic life in this society, the continuous demographic, cultural and economic changes in Lebanon during the last half of the century have made such a definition almost inapplicable to most rural areas in Lebanon, which is characterized by its small area and by the proximity of its regions. Add to these factors, on the one hand, the massive exodus of the rural youth towards the city and the urbanized consumer behaviors they later bring back to their villages, and on the other hand, the circumstances of the Lebanese war that lasted fifteen years and changed the social human map and the criteria adopted to define rural areas. A war which, with

the kinetic and recurrent displacement and movement it imposed, had sometimes a negative impact on awareness levels, and sometimes a positive impact, when it helped to provide easy education opportunities for rural young women. But these education opportunities often did not ensure women the chances for an equal integration at the work and decision-making levels. Owing to educational achievements, the advent of the audio-visual media into every home, social relations, as well as to the amelioration of the means of transport, of social and medical services and of communications, the Lebanese regions have witnessed many urbanization manifestations, which are sometimes parallel to the manifestations of conservatism deeply stirred by this kind of urbanization.

Therefore, the Lebanese rural areas can be classified by two kinds:

- The more urbanized rural areas situated in central Lebanon, although some of its regions have not reached the same degree of urbanization.

- The less urbanized rural areas that suffer from a more serious drain, although some regions had exceptional urbanization opportunities.

Listed under this second kind of rural area are six cazas in which women's conditions will be examined. These cazas are: Baalbek and Al-Hirmil in the Bekaa, Akkar and al-Miniyeh/al-Dinniyeh in the North, Bint Jbeil and Marjeyoun in the South, all of which are victims of rural depopulation. Moreover, the indicators relative to their economic and social conditions and to their infrastructure are still below the national level. Therefore, the majority of women living in these cazas can be considered to be victims of marginalization and poverty, particularly in the agricultural and handicrafts sectors. They are in the same situation as large categories of women in poor families that have drifted from these and other rural areas towards the crowded suburbs surrounding the capital.

A. Constitutional and legislative provisions currently in effect

The are no laws related to rural women. In fact, Article 7 of the Lebanese labor law has excluded workers in the agricultural sector from its provisions. Since most of them are women, female farmers are then excluded from the Lebanese labor law and from all relative and ensuing laws, securities and benefits.

Furthermore, rural women who work in the agricultural domain, as well as the men who work in this sector on a seasonal or intermittent basis, are also excluded from the benefits of the National Social Security Fund. However, the Lebanese government is contributing through its construction plan to the elimination of major obstacles and problems that stand in the way of enabling women to play an important role at the social and economic levels. To date, results of the construction programs remain very limited, and these plans have not been complemented by an expansion in employment opportunities to reduce the declared and disguised unemployment particularly widespread among women.

B. Main aspects of discrimination against rural women

1. Rural women in Lebanese law

The main aspect of discrimination against rural women who work in the agricultural domain and against seasonal workers in general is the exclusion from Lebanese laws and the failure to introduce new laws related to these categories.

2. Role of rural women in public life

On the one hand, in the budget structure presently adopted in Lebanon no development grants have been allocated to rural areas to enhance the advancement opportunities of women. The productive women's contribution to agriculture, just as the farmers', is shrinking because of drowning competition, stagnation, decline in incomes and weak incentives and narrow frameworks of participation (e.g. cooperatives, unions).

On the other hand, neither the role of female farmers nor the role of middle-aged and young farmers in general have been recognized in the agricultural and economic policy development plan. Thus, these female farmers have practically no influence in this respect nor are they represented in the government. The feminist organizations or the committees that deal with planning and economic and agricultural development have no decision-making power in the development process, despite the significant contribution of women to the production process, whether as producers, advisers, or decision-makers.

3. Job security

Rural women play an important role within the realm of their family, their society, and their environment. Indeed, they carry out many tasks inside and outside their homes. Despite their exhausting efforts, they are not shown any appreciation and what is more these efforts are not counted in production and in total household income.

The majority of women in most of the rural areas in these six cazas are workers or family aids in the agricultural domain, which explains their low economic activity, as the following table shows:

Distribution of economically active women according to work continuation

Caza	Permanent work	Seasonal work	Intermittent work
Akkar	75.7%	13.6%	10.5%
Al-Dinniyeh Al Miniyeh	77.9%	14.5%	7.4%
Baalbek	82%	13.3%	4.6%
Al-Hirmil	86.5%	10.4%	3.1%
Marjeyoun	44.7%	48.7%	6.5%
Bint Jbeil	45.8%	51.4%	2.8%

Source: Survey of statistical demographic and housing data, 1996.

The study made by the Central Administration of Statistics showed that the number of women working in the agricultural sector constitutes 11.8% of its total workers. It also indicated that the investigation carried out by the National Commission for Follow-up on Women's Affairs revealed that 2.4% of the women managing an economic activity were farmers and that, if the female agricultural workers (classified with the rest of the workers) were added to them, the declared statistical percentage of women working in the agriculture field would not exceed 5.2%,while it was 26% in 1970.

4. Rural women's wages

The wages earned by women working in the rural areas are low in comparison with the national level. In Akkar for example, the monthly wage rate of female seasonal workers is around 396,000 Lebanese pounds against 543,000 Lebanese pounds for men. These wages are paid for work that does not last for more than five months per year and that sometimes subjects workers to grievous working conditions, as a hiring agent is in charge of gathering girls and transporting them to the workshops and to the fields. This type of hiring restricts the relationship of the wage-earner to the intermediate agent.

5. Lack of services that take into consideration the needs of rural women

The environmental conditions in the border regions have shown that the water supply does not reach 40% of them. Therefore, women generally bring water from local springs and streams and from wells built for collecting rainwater. There are no sewage systems and some sewage must be disposed of in the open valleys, causing ensuing environmental damage and health hazards.

Furthermore, the conditions of minor and main roads that link the remote villages are sometimes bad, which makes movement difficult especially for emergency patients, causes the costs of this movement to increase, and stifles oppenness and development.

6. Family planning

Lebanon lacks a general national policy concerning family planning, and yet, generally speaking, most women have some knowledge of family planning means. The relevant services are available through the private sector (66%) and the official and non-governmental sectors (30%).

It is worthy of mention that the rate of use of family planning means in rural areas is affected by the number of children and their distribution according to sex. This rate increases when the number of boys reaches at least two, thereby reflecting the importance of having boys.

As for age at the first marriage, we notice that the percentage of women who got married at an early age (15-19) is 4.9% at the national level, whereas it doubles at least in the regions of Akkar and Bint Jbeil.

As for the percentage of marriage among relatives, it is extremely high. In Baalbek for example, it is 61% against 21% at the national level.

7. Lack of a financial, economic and development policy

It is true that Lebanon is witnessing construction interventions; however, they are not completely integrated within an economic plan for developing rural areas that would enable the agricultural family, and women in particular, to improve production and marketing. In addition to this non-existent policy, no legislation has been developed in favor of the agricultural sector whether in the labor law or in the forms of land investment. There is no doubt that the area percentage in large properties is around 60% of the fertile agricultural areas in the Bekaa for example, and the centralization of fertile agricultural properties hampers the growth of the farmer's incomes due to the increase in the property rents they pay for the land.

C. Latest legal developments

Nothing changed at the legal level concerning women in the agricultural sector and in rural areas.

D. Developments in the general activity of rural women

1. Developments in the area of education

Education has undergone a significant improvement in school attendance and in reading and writing knowledge for both women and men. Despite this improvement, there are still some differences in the educational factors between rural areas and national levels.

This disparity is mainly due to the difference in the economic, social and developmental levels of these regions. Some remote villages in these cazas for instance lack schools, and most public schools provide only primary education. Moreover, the buildings and equipments of the schools are in bad condition and there is a need for a qualified teaching staff. Pre-elementary education (kindergarten) is rare: whereas 43% of Lebanese children generally receive a pre-elementary education, only 2% of the children in these villages get that opportunity.

Financial and social difficulties prevent girls born into the limited-income agricultural milieu from going to school outside their village after finishing their primary education.

(a) Illiteracy

Despite the sharp improvement in the female illiteracy rate at the national level - it dropped from 42.1% in 1970 to 16% in 1997 - this rate is still high in the rural areas where ten-year-old illiterate girls constitute 38.6% in Akkar, 32.7% in Al-Hirmil, 32.3% in Marjeyoun, 29.6% in al-Dinniyeh/al-Miniyeh, 26.6% in Bint Jbeil and 24.6% in Baalbek, in comparison with the national level.

As regards the age groups 15-24 and 25-44, the results are shown in the following table :Caza	Age Group	
	15-24	25-44
Akkar	22.2%	41.4%
Al-Dinniyeh/al-Miniyeh	12.8%	22.6%
Baalbek	4%	15.3%
Al-Hirmil	11.1%	33.4%
Bint Jbeil	3.2%	17%
Marjeyoun	3%	21.5%
National Rate	4.2%	15.3%

Source: Survey of statistical demographic and housing data, 1996

(b) Educational level

High school and university educational achievements are very negligible and vary from one caza to another, as the following table shows:

Caza	Age Group			
	25-29		30-34	
	Finished high school	Finished university	Finished high school	Finished university
Baalbek	24.3%	4%	17%	4.4%
Al-Hirmil	19.9%	2.8%	14.1%	2.7%
Akkar	12.9%	2.9%	14.1%	3.2%
Al-Dinniyeh/ Al-Miniyeh	13%	3.9%	10.3%	1.7%
Bint Jbeil	20.3%		13.7%	1.7%
Marjeyoun	24.8%	4.5%	22.2%	6.3%
National Rate	27%	14.3%	22.6%	12.7%

Source: Survey of statistical demographic and housing data, 1996.

2 Developments in the area of health

(a) Mother's health

Mother and child-care underwent a considerable and radical improvement about twenty years ago. Educational achievements, broad social interaction, transportation, TV programs on problems facing women, widespread dispensaries in the majority of the cazas and hospitals in the different Lebanese regions, all had a positive influence on women's health condition in general.

The mothers' mortality rate is 104 deaths per 100,000 births at the national level, but there is no data available concerning this rate at the level of the governorates and cazas. However, women's health condition could be deduced from a certain number of indicators, the most important being : pre-natal care, birth place and birth supervisors. The following table shows an improvement in the rural cazas

between 1994 and 1997, and yet women's health condition in these areas is still below the national level.

Baalbek/Al-Hirmil	Akkar/Al-Dinniyeh / Al-Minyeh		National Coverage		
	1994	1997	1994	1996	1996
Pre-natal care					
Doctor	58.6	67.8	55.00	69.8	86.8
Legal midwife	14.9	15.00	3.8	4.2	6.3
Accoucheuse	7.5	2.8	2.3	1.0	2.0
Absence of pre-natal care	19.00	14.5	38.9	25.00	4.9
Birth place					
Hospital	59.3	76.6	58.8	63.7	85.4
Clinic	25.00	17.3	3.5	2.4	8.1
House	15.7	6.1	37.7	34.00	5.8
Other	-	-	-	-	0.7
Birth supervisor					
Doctor	54.9	67.3	47.1	50.00	83.00
Legal midwife	31.1	27.1	22.8	29.7	13.2
Accoucheuse	14.0	5.6	30.1	18.1	3.4
Other supervisor	-	-	-	-	0.4

Source: The Ministry of Public Health / UNICEF, 1997.

The Ministry of Public Health, in collaboration with the licensed dispensaries located in large villages, endeavors to ensure a minimum level of health care for women. Nevertheless, these dispensaries are often in need of the required equipment and specialization, and the health care services they offer differ from the national level. Moreover, some remote villages lack a medical center, a doctor or a dispensary, and thus they do not have health care services women and citizens in general can benefit from.

In addition, there are obstacles resulting from traditions, family and social clannishness concerning women, and religious beliefs. There are also financial problems that prevent women in the rural areas from taking advantage of healthcare services.

(b) Newborn and infant mortality

As to stillbirth and infant mortality, the results of the national survey of mother and child health (1996) indicate that the mortality rate of children under five has developed positively in all regions during the last ten years. However, this improvement was more evident in Mount-Lebanon and Beirut, acceptable in the Bekaa, while in the South, and contrarily to all the other regions, the infant mortality rate rose by 19%. This increase was due to human losses and to the destruction ensuing from Israeli occupation and continuous Israeli bombardments.The improvement that took place in the North is

below the acceptable level. It could be attributed to the growth disparity among the regions in the North, which were not affected by the current development and construction plans.

Governorate	Mortality Rate		Improvement Rate
Beirut	23.5	15.9	32%
Mount Lebanon	38.1	22.4	41.2%
South	29.4	35.2	19%(decreased)
North	55.4	51.5	7%
Bekaa	44.2	35.9	18.7%
National Rate	35.00	27.9	20.3

Source: The national survey of mother and child health, The preparatory report, 1996.

3. Developments in the area of training

It is a known fact that rural women play a leading role in supporting their family and society. There is no doubt that the economic crisis that started with the Lebanese war and was aggravated with the inflation phenomenon that has gone on since the mid-eighties, forced women to look for additional work opportunities whether in the agricultural sector or in the production of agricultural products. Furthermore, women undertake projects beneficial to their family, participate in the development of domestic industries, and transform their agricultural crops into products for sale on the markets (jams, juices, alcoholic drinks, Lebanese foods, marinated vegetables, etc.) in addition to handicrafts, embroidering and sewing.

However, the handicraft work of rural women was mostly traditional ; therefore, training sessions were necessary to help them to improve their performance level and provide them with opportunities to form assistance groups with other women through cooperatives, economic, developmental and guiding programs, and marketing facilities.

The nongovernmental sector has started providing assistance, especially in the strengthening of the concept of self-help groups, in promoting the notions of participation, guidance and initiative.

In 1994, a development project called "the Project for the Revitalization of Animal Production," was planned in Lebanon for the benefit of small property owners. Its sphere of activity was set in the Bekaa pursuant to a loan agreement between the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the OPEC Fund for Development and with a substantial contribution from the Lebanese government. This project aims at helping small farmers and breeders to increase their productivity and to raise the rural family income. However, it neither benefited from pre-production services (veterinary services network, fodder production and manufacture) nor from post-production services (centers for collecting, manufacturing and marketing milk and dairy produce, joining breeders and beneficiaries within a cooperative to negotiate and contract with the dairy produce factories of the private sector). Therefore, buying the cows did not constitute a sufficient condition to develop the animal sector and to raise the small properties' revenues, which include women's incomes, because the loan was not taken out under conditions likely to produce economic and social returns. Consequently, milk became much of the time a burden for property owners who took out loans, especially women. It is worth mentioning that the project provided 500 loans over a period of three

years. It strives to encourage the creation of nine production, industrial and alimentary cooperatives for women in order to sell and promote the products. Once more the project was not joined with the efforts of other projects and administrations that provide the other essential conditions to produce the returns and the social benefits of the loans, especially for women. However, some nongovernmental organizations train women and give them agricultural, health, veterinary and production guidance through theoretical, instruction sessions, during which they learn methods of agriculture and manufacturing.

There is another project for irrigation, which is under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture and financed by IFAD. It comprises clauses to benefit rural women within an integrated project for irrigating all the regions. Another program for the development of the capabilities and skills of rural women is being carried out all over Lebanon. Moreover, there is a project for integrated rural development and for alternatives to drug-producing crops in the Baalbek/al-Hermel region in collaboration with the Lebanese government and United Nations Organizations. The project aims in principle at achieving integrated rural development in the two aforementioned cazas. But this program is still facing hindrances as it did not concentrate in its strategy on agricultural development in this region. These obstacles result from the fact that many parties in the rich countries have not kept the numerous promises they made to the Lebanese administration to finance development in this region.

VI. Representation and participation in political and public life and at the international level

A. Constitutional and legislative provisions currently in effect

- The Lebanese Constitution affirms in Article 7 that all Lebanese shall be equal before the law without any sexual, racial or religious discrimination.
- Article 12 stipulates that each Lebanese shall have the right to hold public office and no one shall have an advantage over the other except on the basis of merit and capability according to the conditions provided by the law.
- In 1953, women acquired their political rights after years of activism, pressure, and making demands.
- In 1957, a law was issued providing that the electoral registers shall include men and women.
- In 1963, a law was issued establishing the right of women to elect and be elected in the municipal councils.
- The law organizing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants grants women the right to participate on the basis of equal opportunity.

  Paragraph 1 of Article 53 of the legislative decree n° 149/83 granted the female employees in the foreign service the right to ask to be in provisional retirement in order to take care of their newborns, and the right to equality in pre-nuptial authorization.

B. Main aspects of discrimination against women

1. Political life

There is no legal discrimination against women in political life, in running for election to political or political party positions, or in participating in committees. However, there are obstacles standing in the way of overcoming the male chauvinist mentality by accepting women as leaders or giving them a vote of confidence, and eliminating the traditional discrimination against their right to promotion and advancement.

2. Representation and participation at the international level

The regulation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants stipulates that the female candidates for filling the vacant posts of the third category in the foreign service shall be unmarried.

The regulation forbids the wife of an employee in the foreign service who is nominated abroad from working, while the female employee whose husband has a job that does not have the approval of the Minister is transferred to the administration.

Although women have the right to participate in and head diplomatic delegations, representation is in fact delegated to men even if the theme of the conference concerns women.

The reality shows that the presence of women in middle management and in high-ranking positions is very negligible.

C. Latest legal developments

No legal change has been made in political life and in participation at the international level.

D. Developments in women's participation in political and public life and in representation at the international level

The laws and traditions that establish the sectarian quota system in political representation and in the functions exclude women since a denomination rarely accepts to be represented by a woman. Although there is no legal discrimination against women nor are there violations of their human rights because of their political activity as members of feminist organizations, there are obstacles preventing them from participating in political life, the most important being :

- The sectarian electoral law predominated by the traditional and patriarchal mentality of the denominations.
- The lack of proportional representation.
- The absence of solidarity among women to face a male dominated solidarity that aims at maintaining men's domination in all institutions.
- The non-adoption of competence as a political criterion.

- The increasing expenditure ceiling for obtaining political positions, and the small number of wealthy women.
- The low social awareness of women's role and status.
- The absence of legislative measures to ensure the participation of women in public life (specific quotas or shares in the councils and the governments as a provisional plan).
- The absence of administrative interest in the representation of women even in institutions where they are present in large numbers and where their work prevails, such as the education and social services sectors (no woman has been appointed as Minister of Education or Social Affairs in Lebanon yet).

In order to face these obstacles, the feminist nongovernmental associations and other organizations have taken the following measures :

- Holding conferences and seminars through the multimedia.
- Travelling across the different Lebanese regions to make women aware of their rights and of their effective role, and to encourage them to participate in elections in order to elect and be elected.
- Fighting against legal illiteracy in which regard conferences and seminars were held to inform women of all their legal rights and of the discrimination, obstacles and problems that affect and prevent them from occupying decision-making positions.
- Asserting the necessity of coordination and collaboration among the various feminist and non-feminist organizations in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination against any male and female citizen.
- Lobbying for the creation of a law that puts a ceiling on the financial expenses allocated to electoral campaigns, and to give candidates equal publicity opportunities in the media.

These measures had an effective impact on the participation of women in political life, and in particular on encouraging them to run for the latest elections of the local councils.

E. Participation of women in political life

1. Parliamentary elections

Although women enjoy political rights, they rarely run for elections. Before 1992, one woman was elected to complete the term of office of her deceasead father and another was nominated after her husband died as a martyr. In 1992, nine women ran for the parliamentary elections and three won, two of them obtaining high percentages of votes.

In 1996, ten women ran for election. Three were also elected with high percentages of votes ; in other words, the Parliament comprises today three women out of 128 (2.3%).

2. Local council elections

The Lebanese Women's Council, the Nongovernmental Committee for Following-up on Women's Issues, the Committee for Lebanese Women's Rights and other feminist organizations played an active role that encouraged women to participate effectively by running for and voting in elections of the local councils. 353 women ran for election in the different Lebanese regions and 139 were elected.

Participation of women in the local authorities by region

	Candidates	Elected	Losers	Percentage of the elected
Beirut	17	1	16	6%
Mount Lebanon	142	48	94	34%
North	130	63	67	48.5%
Bekaa	25	13	12	52%
South	23	5	18	12%
Nabatiyeh	16	9	7	68%
Total	353	139	214	-

There are 3 women among 708 mayors and 78 women won in the elective councils out of 7662 members.

3. Political parties

The participation of women in the activity of political parties remains partial. Their role is actually limited to social and humanitarian work.

The parties for their part did not take any special measures to increase the number of women among their members or in positions of responsibility. In fact, women are almost completely absent in the leadership of political parties :

- The Communist Party : 2 out of 75 members at the National Council.
  No women in the Politburo.
  One woman on the Central Supervisory Committee.
- The Nationalist Party : No women in the leadership.
- The National Bloc Party: 3 women in the party's Council.
  One woman on the Executive Committee.
- Phelangist Party : 20% of the members.
  15% of the elective body.
  10% of the Central Council.
  4% of the party executives.
  5% of the party leadership.

- Hezbollah : 22.5% are women.
  No women among the party's executives.
- The Amal Movement : 10% of the leadership.
  30 % of the Movement's members.

The parties themselves are the source of this information.

4. Labor unions

The participation of women in trade unions and in their leadership is quite low, except for the unions in which membership is required in order to practice the profession (See the statistics mentioned in the chapter "Labor and Economy").

5. Public service positions

Although the Lebanese law does not discriminate against women as regards joining the civil service, studies show that women's share in this service does not exceed 6.1% of its total number of offices. It should be pointed out that some explanations impute this low percentage to the presence of the armed forces.

However, the distribution of women by office in the civil service demonstrates the marginalization they are victims of in the high-ranking offices and in the executive management linked to decision and policy making. Moreover, the percentage of women holding some of these offices is extremely low.

General Manager :	One woman in person, another by proxy
Female Ambassador :	Two Women
Governor :	—
Administrative Officer :	4.16%
Secretaries and Attachés :	10.9%
First Category :	1.6%
Second Category :	8.4%
Third Category :	20.7%

It is noted that women's presence becomes rarer as we move up the administrative ladder, which is a sign of hesitation about encouraging and giving women the opportunity to fill positions of responsibility in public administration.This also indicates that the government is not making any effort or taking any initiative. Moreover, it neither adopted measures to grant women their chance and their right to promotion, to a gradual advancement up the hierarchy, to salary, and to duties, nor did it present training and rehabilitation programs for them.

The events witnessed by the judicial body in 1966, 1973, 1977 and 1993 prove discrimination committed against women in that the female candidates were excluded from appointment to judges on the basis of sex.

The Ministry of Education, whose teaching staff is mostly composed of women, has restricted their presence to the third and fourth categories, whereas they are absent in the first and second.

The same situation applies to the National Social Security Fund and to the public administration sector where women are absent in the first and second categories and present in the third and the fourth.

6. The military

According to military law, the total maximum percentage of women in the different institutions of the Ministry of National Defense is set at 10% of the total number of male and female soldiers:

- 25% at the headquarters, in the corps, and in the units
- 40% in the military hospitals

7. The judicial branch

The number of women in the judicial body is increasing but to a lesser extent than that of men. Nevertheless, they have not been appointed in the high councils such as the Judicial Council, the Supreme Judicial Council and the Constitutional Council.

Judicial Council :	No women
Court of Arbitration :	2
State Council :	8
Supreme Judicial Council :	No women
Constitutional Council :	No women
Consultation Office :	1

8. Participation and representation of women at the international level

Lebanese women enjoy the right to represent the government at the international level and to take part in the activities of international organizations on an equal basis with men. During the last few years, the number of women joining the diplomatic corps has visibly increased. This rise is due to many factors, the most important being progress in women's educational achievements and their higher percentage of registration in political science departments on the one hand, and the evolution of mentalities and society's acceptance of women working in this field on the other hand.

Despite the absence of programs encouraging women to join this corps or to present applications to hold office in the international bodies, they have made progress worthy of attention.

Percentage of women in embassies

Category	Position	Number	Percentage
First Category	Ambassador	1	1.44%
Second Category	Advisers	5	7.44%
Third Category	Secretaries and Attachés	25	10.90%

Proportion of women working as foreign service experts in international meetings

The insignificant participation rate of women as experts in international meetings is noted and some examples are given here :

In the conference on social affairs: One.

In the conference on health: One.

Proportion of women in diplomatic delegations

There are no statistics available at this level.

As member of the International Committee for Women in New York, Lebanon was represented by Mrs. Laure Moughayzel, but after her death she was replaced by a man.

VII. Education

A. Constitutional and legislative provisions currently in effect

1. Right to education

Lebanese law ensures all levels of education - primary, secondary and university - as well as general technical and vocational education for all citizens without any discrimination. Moreover, there is not any explicit prejudice against women in the general policies and in the sectoral educational programs.

Lebanese law does not prohibit the possibility of coeducation ; therefore, there are many mixed schools.

Lebanese law does not discriminate against women in curricula and in examinations.

Lebanese law ensures the right to physical education and sports for women as well as men. It is noteworthy that sports are compulsory in the new curricula.

The expenditure rate per individual is the same for male and female students in the public education or in other words in the state education.

2. Right to choose specialization

Lebanese law ensures the freedom to choose educational specialization for all citizens without imposing specific quotas for each specialization. Consequently, girls can study the same subjects as boys at all school, high school and university levels. However, urban dwellers, particularly in the capital, have a wider range of choice than the male and female inhabitants of the borderlands.

The Ministry of Education is presently introducing career guidance in its guidance programs at the intermediate level. The training program for career counselors will include a clause that deals with gender sensitivity in order to attain career guidance that transcends the stereotyped roles, duties and professions of women and men.

3. Family education

No law in Lebanon imposes the introduction of family education in the curricula. Therefore, the concepts related to this education remain disarrayed without being incorporated in a context with clear outlines.

4. Educational advancement plan

In 1994, the Council of Ministers approved the educational advancement plan. It comprises educational mechanisms and conditions that deter students from dropping out of schools prematurely and reduce the risks of illiteracy. In December 1996, the new education framework was announced as the first step of this plan and its implementation began in the school year 1998-1999. The second step was the revision of the curricula.

B. Main aspects of discrimination against women

1. Right to education

In March 1998, Parliament ratified the amendment of Article 49 of the legislative decree n° 134/59 making primary education free and compulsory. The Parliament then entrusted the Council of Ministers with the task of adopting the adequate methods to enforce the law relative to compulsory and free basic education. Work is now underway towards finding the appropriate formulas for this issue. However, despite the efforts of the Ministry of Education to ensure a place for each child, the gap still exists between compulsory and free education. Since the latter is the real guarantee for people who enjoy few privileges in society, in particular females, then discrimination against women still stands implicitly.

2. Sexual discrimination

The educational objectives of the new pre-university curricula do not explicitly proclaim their fight against sexual discrimination, whereas they do regarding their fight against racial and religious discrimination. Moreover, they neglect in their formulation to address women or to describe their conditions, their jobs or their social and domestic roles.

3. Discrimination in the components of pre-university education

The curricula and the official graduation examinations are standardized throughout the Lebanese territory. The difference in quality among teaching staffs, buildings, and equipments, derives from the difference in the nature of the schools (mixed, exclusively for boys, exclusively for girls) among the regions. In fact, the schools with high academic and administrative performance are concentrated in the capital, in the coastal cities, and in Mount Lebanon, and most of them are mixed.

4. Discrimination in educational programs

The educational objectives of the new pre-university curricula, as already mentioned, do not explicitly proclaim their fight against sexual discriminition. Nevertheless, the persons responsible for implementing new curricula and for writing the school textbooks forestalled by asking the writers to avoid the gender-related stereotypes and urging them to present categories of both sexes and of their

social roles without any discrimination in value and importance. However, these writers did not have training that would qualify them to follow these instructions, so their attempts fell through.

C. Latest legal developments

On March 10, 1998, the Parliament ratified the amendment of Article 49 of legislative decree n° 134/59 and so primary education became free and compulsory.

D. Developments in the educational progress of women

1. Educational choices

The choices of education in Lebanon are based on two essential factors. The first divides high school students among options and choices of education according to their preferences and potentials and not to their gender. These options are scientific and literary. It is noted that the "scientific" are increasing and the "literary" are decreasing in all schools, even though the percentage is lower in schools for girls 45.8% against 84.6% in schools for boys.

The second factor is the type of school, whether it is mixed or exclusive for one sex. It is pointed out here that Lebanese schools tend to be mixed (92.4%).

2. School entrance and dropout rates

During the last few years, Lebanon witnessed a marked improvement in the rates of school entrance and reading knowledge for both women and men. However, the differences in the educational indicators among the regions still have an important significance that varies according to the economic and social situations of the populations in the same area and among the regions.

The school attendance rate for both girls and boys usually drops after primary school.

The school entrance rate for girls has increased during the last quarter of a century at all levels of education. If we take the age group 5 – 14, we find for example that this rate has risen from 79% in 1970 to 94% in 1996.

If we consider the differences between boys and girls according to the type of school the students go to - that is public, private, and free private schools - we can deduce that girls more often attend public schools, whereas boys enter more and more free private schools as well as private schools requiring tuition.

No one possesses figures that would be useful for determining the expenses paid by students in each type of school. Actually, we do not have anything that would help us look for any potential discrimination against women. Nevertheless, the officials at the Ministry of Education assert that the Ministry's policy is by no means sexually discriminatory.

3. Illiteracy

During the last two decades, the general illiteracy rate of the Lebanese population has tangibly decreased from 31.8% in 1970 to 11.6% in 1997. The illiteracy rates of females over 10 are for their

part higher than those of males as they reach 16% in comparison with a general rate of about 7.2% for males.

Illiteracy rates vary among women and men over 15. They are 20% for women and 10% for men.

Illiteracy level by sex and age group in chosen years

Age Group	1970			1997		
	Women	Men	Gender Gap	Women	Men	Gender Gap
10-14	15.3	6.1	2.5	1.7	1.4	1.2
15-19	20.7	8.5	2.4	2.3	2.4	0.9
20-24	28.6	11	2.6	3.9	2.7	1.4
25-29	27.8	15.2	2.4	5.7	2.8	2.0
10 and above	42.1	21.5	1.9	16	7.2	2.2

Source: The survey of statistical demographic and housing data, 1996

The results of the latest statistics that determined the illiteracy rates by sex, age group and region were as follows:

Age Group and Sex	Beirut	Beirut Suburbs	Mount Lebanon	North	South	Naba-tiyeh	Bekaa	Leba-non
25-29								
Males	1.2	2.5	0.7	6.4	4.1	0.5	1.8	2.8
Females	6.1	3.2	2.1	11.5	8.2	1.6	5.9	5.7
35-39								
Males	2.1	3.8	2.4	8.7	5	2.1	4.1	4.4
Females	8.2	7.9	3.3	19.3	12.1	8.7	16	10.7
45-49								
Males	4.9	5.1	1.9	16.7	7.2	1.7	10.1	7
Females	12.9	17.9	8.7	33	39.3	36	33.3	23.9
55-59								
Males	8.6	14	7.9	23	16.1	13.5	15.5	13.8
Females	24.6	33.6	22	51.4	58.7	57.3	64.9	42.1

Source: Lebanese family living standards, 1997.

They indicate the following facts :

• The illiteracy rates of the over 15 group increase with the age group for both men and women, and to a larger extent for women.

• The illiteracy rates increase in some regions like the North, the Bekaa and Nabatiyeh, while they decrease in the some other regions like Beirut and Mount Lebanon for both sexes, and to a larger extent for women.

As for literacy programs, they are implemented by the centers dependent on the Ministry of Social Affairs and on the nongovernmental associations, under the auspices of the National Committee for the Elimination of Illiteracy. With the exception of illiterate soldiers and recruits in the "military service", the main persons who benefit from these programs are girls and women (about 90%).

4. University education and specialization distribution

The percentage of girls registered in higher education in Lebanon is 51% of the total number of students. Moreover, the percentage of female entrance to universities has increased during the last four years.

As far as the specializations at the universities are concerned, the available information indicates the following :

• A higher concentration of girls in the literary, human, social, pedagogical, artistic and informational specializations (languages, psychology, theater, information, pedagogy, etc.).

• A lower percentage of girls choosing pure sciences (physics, mathematics) and engineering (mechanical, electrical).

• A higher percentage of girls choosing paramedical professions (pharmacy, laboratory, nursing, etc...) against a lower percentage opting for medicine in particular.

The 1996 statistics indicate that the majority of working women who hold university degrees had specialized in the field of arts and social sciences (30.4%), economy and business management (18.4%). Therefore, the higher educational level of women did not result in a fundamental diversification in the specializations they study. Female entrance to university is still concentrated in the "feminine" fields disregarding the needs of the labor market, although we are witnessing an increase in certain scientific domains such as engineering, sciences and medicine, as the following table shows:

Female percentage of the total number of students in higher education by specialization

Specialization	1970	1996
Arts and Social Sciences	29.3	77.4
Law and Economy	14.4	49
Business Management	9.2	45.3
Medicine and Agriculture	13.7	51.4
Sciences and Mathematics	26.9	45.7
Technology and Engineering	3.8	23.7
Total Number of Students	22.1	51.1

Source: The situation of the Lebanese woman, 1997

5. Educational and study abroad scholarships

The Lebanese government does not designate an exclusive location for distributing educational and study abroad scholarships to students, which means that there are no available data on this subject. In view of the increasing numbers of female university professors who finished their studies abroad, and of female researchers who obtained grants for their research, it can be concluded that the granting organizations do not discriminate against women in particular.

6. Educational achievements

The most recent statistical reports on the distribution of the population (over 20) by sex and educational achievements in the urban and rural areas, show that the gap in educational achievements between both sexes widens with age. It is larger in the rural than in the urban areas and is also widening among women between these areas.

7. Job and career guidance for girls

Education and guidance institutions, private and nongovernmental, have been sponsoring annual programs and exhibitions for a few years now in order to guide male and female students in high schools to their university choices. However, there are no specific data on the gender-related tendencies of these activities and on their impact (its force and extent) on the effective choices of these students.

The female entrance to vocational education is still low and the percentage of girls in the four levels was distributed as follows during the last three years :

Percentage of girls in public vocational education

Years	Vocational Brevet	Vocational Baccalaureate	Vocational Excellence	Vocational License	Gender Rate
1994-1995	31.6	33.3	39.9	34.8	0.52
1995-1996	16.3	32.9	43.5	33.1	0.52
1996-1997	20.8	34.7	40.6	25.7	0.52

These percentages increase particularly in higher private vocational education, as the following table shows:

Percentage of girls in private vocational education

Years	Vocational Brevet	Vocational Bacca-laureate	Vocational Excellence	Vocational License	Special Diploma	Gender Rate
1994-1995	40.9	46.2	45.6	4.6	60.6	1
1995-1996	26	47	44.3	25	59.6	0.9
1996-1997	30.7	46.8	42.3	72.9	56.3	0.9

Source: The Center of Pedagogical Research and Development, 1999

8. Sports

The government does not follow a discriminatory policy in the field of sports, which are compulsory in pre-university education for boys and girls. However, the freedom of movement and clothing boys enjoy in comparison with girls allows them greater and more diversified opportunities to do sports.

Furthermore, extracurricular sport services are not available for low-income persons. They are either mixed or they fix specific days for women (swimming pools, clubs).

The only study (underway) of the conduct patterns of young boys and girls, including sports conduct, states that 50% of the girls under 18 do sports (while the percentage is 70% for boys) and jogging comes at the top of the list of girls' preferences.

E. Women working in the educational sector

The educational sector contains the most women. They represent 68% of the total number of professors, teachers, and other specialists. In fact, this professional group includes the biggest percentage of women among the other professional groups, reaching 23%, while the percentage of men therein does not exceed 3%.

In vocational education, the female percentage decreases to 29.93% , it also drops as we move up the academic hierarchy. At universities, for example, the percentage of women in comparison with men reaches its minimum level, as the following table shows:

Percentage of women working in education at the Lebanese University and at private universities

Years	Female percentage at the Lebanese University	Female percentage at the private universities
1994-1995	33.4	32.7
1995-1996	32.9	35.2
1996-1997	33.7	31.8

Source: The Educational Center of Pedagogical Research and Development, 1999.

And according to academic rank, it is as follows:

Sex	Academic Rank					
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Unspecified	Total
Male	90.5	82	76.9	43.2	61.1	75.6
Female	9.5	18	23.1	56.8	38.1	24.4
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Higher education in Lebanon - The Lebanese Commission for Educational Sciences

On the other hand, despite the massive presence of women in the Lebanese educational sector, the percentage of those who participated in the workshop of the educational advancement plan was negligible. Actually, only one woman was present on the high committee, and their rate of participation in the subcommittees did not exceed 46.8% (there were 118 women against 252 men).

VIII. Equality in health care

A. Constitutional and legislative provisions currently in effect

1. Right to health

Lebanese law does not discriminate against women in the field of health care. In fact, they have access to health care services, including those related to family planning, without the need for their husband's authorization.

2. Birth control

Lebanese law allows women, as already mentioned, to use birth control without the need for their husband's authorization.

3. Abortion

Lebanese law prohibits abortion and only allows the termination of pregnancy for medical reasons under specific conditions. It punishes the call for abortion (Articles 539 and 209 of the penal code) and the sale of substances intended for abortion or the facilitation of their use (Article 540 of the penal code).

As for women who abort themselves by means they use or other persons use with their consent, they are sentenced to a period of six months to three years in prison (Article 541 of the penal code) and their act is considered to be a felony.

Women who abort themselves to preserve their honor shall benefit from the mitigating excuse (Article 545 of the penal code), while this excuse does not apply to their partner (Article 216 of the penal code).

The law considers intentional abortion without the woman's consent a crime. It is also a crime if the abortion or the means used led to the woman's death, whether it was with or without her consent, or if more dangerous means than those she agreed to were used. The applicable criminal penalty differs in each of these circumstances (Article 543 of the penal code).

4. Termination of pregnancy for medical reasons

Lebanese law allows the termination of pregnancy for medical reasons under specific conditions. According to the medical code of ethics, law n° 288 dated February 22, 1994, these conditions are:

- The abortion must be the only means to save the mother whose life is in grave danger. The mother's threatened health is not a good enough reason ; her life must be in serious danger.

- The attending physician or the surgeon must consult two doctors who perform a medical examination, deliberate, and

agree that the mother's life can only be saved through the abortion. Then, they sign together a report thereon.

- The pregnant woman must consent to the abortion after having been informed of the situation. Her consent can only be foregone if she is unconscious or in serious danger and the abortion is necessary to save her life. In this case, the doctor must perform the abortion despite the objection of her husband or her relatives.

5. Sterilization

There are no laws in Lebanon relative to sterilization.

B. Main aspects of discrimination against women

1. Right to health

The cost of health care services, on which Lebanon spends 10% of its gross national product, has doubled during the last three years. 50% of the Lebanese population benefit from various health insurance policies, which means that a large portion of the Lebanese population is uninsured. This situation particularly affects female heads of household. The government, in collaboration with the nongovernmental sector involved in the health care field, offers quasi-free health care services for uninsured citizens. It provides hospitalization as well as the outrageously expensive treatment for chronic diseases and cancers for uninsured persons without any discrimination between the two sexes.

2. Abortion

Discrimination still exists since no laws legalize abortion except in specific cases. In view of the fact that abortion is usually performed secretly, and considering the justifications for authorizing it in some of these cases, it is deduced that these justifications and practices stem from the patriarchal and gender-based system. Moreover, some of them ignore the needs and conditions of the woman as a self-sufficient person and concentrate on the fact that she plays a role and constitutes a party in an unequal relationship with the man, besides being his point of honor.

C. Latest legal developments

1. Right to health

Women benefit, indirectly, from the free services offered by the government or the nongovernmental organizations and the municipalities, as members of the poorest social category which has the least control over financial resources. Furthermore, they benefit from the projects and the programs aimed at the family in general, and at the child in particular. This also applies, to a greater extent, to female heads of household. (Their percentage in Lebanon is over 14% according to the 1996 statistics.)

The State ensures free child delivery in the governmental hospitals spread over the cazas and governorates. It also ensures child deliveries that require special, intensive or urgent care in the private hospitals for uninsured women.

In addition, the number of centers that offer quasi-free services for women within the framework of the reproductive health project has increased.

2. Reproductive health

During the last two years and as a result of the attention paid to women's needs in the health care field, a positive discrimination has emerged. It is the equivalent to a recognition that women's reproductive function increases, in quantity and in quality, the possibility of their facing health complications, and requires therefore special health care.

This recognition was manifested in two fundamental issues:

- The incorporation of reproductive health and family planning in the basic health care programs.
- The incorporation of education related to reproduction in the general pre-university curricula.

The two issues have a direct impact on aspects related to women's health.

D. Developments in women's health

1. Mothers' mortality rate

The mothers' mortality rate is estimated at 104 deaths per 100,000 births according to the national survey of mother and child health. However, this estimate is high and it expresses the reality indirectly based on a preceding period of time 12 years prior to the date of the survey . If we rely on other indicators of mothers' health, like prenatal care and supervision of the delivery by a qualified health care worker, we notice that the situation is good since it indicates 87% for prenatal care and

96% for delivery supervision. In addition, child delivery services are available for a large number of the population and it is possible to draw attention to two important points :

- There is a disparity in these services among the regions. Some of them are inhabited by 15% of the population, where more than 35% of the women do not monitor their pregnancy, and where the delivery of about 14% of the pregnant women is not supervised by a qualified person.

- The quality of the services offered in the poor regions to the uninsured persons in the governmental and nongovernmental sectors is below the level of services offered in the private sector.

2. Life expectancy for women and men

Life expectancy is estimated at about 72 years for women in comparison with 69 years for men (1996). The World Bank estimates indicate a continuing increase in life expectancy in the next few years along with the continuing influence of the gap between men and women on the present trajectory.

3. Newborn and infant mortality rates

Newborn Mortality (under 1 year of age)			Infant Mortality (under 5 years of age)		
Males	Females	Rate	Males	Females	Rate
28	27.6	28	33	31	32

Source: The Lebanese survey of mother and child health, 1996

The last five years registered a drop in newborn and infant mortality rates from 35 to 28 per thousand for newborns and from 43 to 32 per thousand for children under 5. These averages are close to the objective that the Lebanese government intends to reach in 2001 (24 per thousand for newborns and 28 per thousand for children under 5). It is noteworthy that this rate is not influenced by the sex of the newborn, but varies according to the educational level and age of the mother. It decreases among mothers who are high school graduates (14.8 per thousand) and increases among illiterate mothers (54.5 per thousand). Moreover, young mothers (under 20) lose their newborns more often than older mothers.

4. Main causes of women's mortality

Statistics show that the main causes of women's mortality are blood diseases and tumors (34%) followed by natural causes (26%).

5. Births

The total fertility rate in Lebanon is 2.2 (1996). The majority of women have given birth to 3 or 4 children, whereas 7% did not have any children and 4% had 9 or more.

The gap between urban and rural women is clear as the following table shows:

Female Age Group	Total	Rural Areas	Urban Areas
15-19	15.7	15.0	18.3
20-24	84.9	79.1	109.5
25-29	127.5	121.8	152.2
30-34	113.1	107.0	141.8
35-39	68.0	62.0	99.2
40-44	21.2	17.9	39.1
45-49	5.2	4.7	7.5
Total Fertility Rate	3.02	2.5	2.8

Source: The conditions of women and men in Lebanon, 1999.

It is worth mentioning that the gap between urban and rural women has tangibly decreased in the last few decades.

6. Prenatal care

The recent available studies (1997) show that the percentage of pregnant women who receive medical care during their pregnancy is 87% at the national level, but it differs among the regions. The percentage of those who do not receive medical care is distributed as follows by region and by cause:

Governorate	Absence of Health Problems	Previous Experience	Absence of Health Services	High Cost	Others	Not Indicated
Beirut	33.3			33.3		33.3
Mount Lebanon	44.4	11.1		33.3	11.1	
North	61	8.2		27.5	3.3	
Bekaa	38.1	21.4	4.8	21.4	9.5	4.8
South	87.5	6.3		6.3		
Nabatiyeh	79.2	8.3			12.5	

Source: The Lebanese survey of mother and child health, 1996.

In fact, the causes for the lack of prenatal care are primarily related to the absence of health education and awareness and secondly to the high cost.

7. Nutrition programs for pregnant women

The studies made in 1998 indicated that the percentage of anemia cases resulting from a lack of iron among women at childbearing age in Lebanon is 25%. Consequently, the Lebanese government, represented by the Ministry of Public Health, in collaboration with the other Ministries concerned, and with the support of the United Nations Organizations, undertook the elaboration of a national plan to face this medical problem by increasing the amount of iron and folic acid in flour. The production of iron-enriched flour is expected to begin in the year 2000.

8. Use of birth control

We deduce from the 1996 statistics that the percentage of Lebanese women who use contraceptives amounts to 61%, which is a high proportion in comparison with those in the Arab countries. The percentages of the contraceptive methods in use are distributed as follows:

Pill	10%
Loop (IUD)	17.1%
Condom	5.6%
Other recent methods	4.5%
"Safe period"	9.9%
Withdrawal method	11.8%
Other traditional methods	23.8%
Do not use contraceptives	39%

The most important reason that drives women to abstain from using contraceptive methods is their wish to have another child (21%), then there is the discomfort they feel when using the method (13%) and the disapproval of the husband (13%).

It is worthy of note that the percentage of use of birth control methods is affected by the number of children and their distribution by sex. It increases when the number of boys reaches two at least, which reflects the importance of having boys.

E. Health Care workers

1. Workers in the health care sector

The available statistics on male and female workers in the health care sector do not show discrimination against women as they constitute the majority of workers (65.5%). Furthermore, men and women are almost equally distributed into the categories. 276 legal midwives work in 171 clinics and cover about 13% of all births in Lebanon.

2. Traditional health care workers

According to the latest statistics (1998), there are still 40 traditional midwives (non-graduate midwives) in Lebanon. They practice in the borderlands and especially in the North (79.4%). They are unspecialized (about 7% are nurses' aides) and the majority are illiterate (63.7%) and render their services at the women's homes.

3. Religious leaders

Certain religious figures undertake the mission of spiritual guidance, which is sometimes similar to psychological care. The overwhelming majority of the solicitors of this care are women. These figures play a leading role in establishing and consolidating the status of the woman in the family and in urging her to accept her real and psychological suffering as inherent to her natural function. They work without any authorization or control from the government or the governmental and nongovernmental organizations involved in women's affairs.

F. Sexually transmitted diseases

The latest statistics provided by the official source, the National Program for Fighting AIDS, indicate an oscillation (according to the years) in the reported numbers of AIDS cases in Lebanon, which amount at present to 529. 77.8% of the AIDS patients are men and 21.3% are women.

As far as the possible modes of transmission of the virus are concerned, heterosexual relations come at the top of the list with a percentage of 45.1%. In the past, most persons infected with the HIV virus were not residents ; today, about 53% of them have never left the country (for emigration or tourism).

"The National Program for Fighting AIDS" carries out many activities. Although they do not include a special program aimed at women, they point out that women constitute a group exposed to additional risks from their partner if he has sexual relations while abroad, with prostitutes or other.

G. Challenges and restrictions facing the implementation of women's right to health

Laws, customs, traditions and religions sometimes brew together to stand in the way of studying certain aspects of women's life related to their psychological and physical health. Abortion, for example, is legally prohibited except in specific cases and it is often secretly performed. This secrecy carries risks whose price women pay with their health and sometimes with their lives. At the same time, it prevents the study of the aspects of these risks and the spread of their impact.

Moreover, discretion obstructs the determination of the spread of the recourse to hysterectomy and its psychological and physical impact on women and on their relationship with men.

Our society (the government included) still refuses to recognize the spread of the phenomenon of domestic violence and particularly the physical and psychological violence against women. Therefore, the enumeration, description and analysis of the cases are restricted to those with tragic ends. Sexual harassment, rape, incest, and the prostitution of women and children suffer the same fate. They all still constitute a thrilling subject for the media more than one for scientific research.

Researchers in the field of women's studies in Lebanon tend to defer taking an interest in issues that could be the seeds of definite health and psychological problems. Among these issues is the tendency to delay marriage age (women as well as men), which is evident in the following statistics :

Year	Average age of women's first marriage
1970	23.7
1986	25
1996	27.5

Source: The situation of the Lebanese woman, 1997

The phenomenon of people postponing their marriage age is associated with the increasing phenomenon of spinsterhood, which can be observed in the growing percentage of single women (more than single men) over thirty during the last three decades.

Among the issues whose consideration is also postponed are the health consequences of women's higher life expectancy and the possibility of their being subjected to complex discrimination resulting from their belonging to these two categories (the elderly and women).The same applies to women who are handicapped, divorced, widows, addicts, psychopaths and non-Lebanese citizens, etc.

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